Dec07
REDEEMER COLLEGE LIBRARY
777 GARNER RD E
ANCASTER ON L9K 1J4

PM# 40009999 R9375

CHRISTIAN COURIER

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LIBRARY
CHRISTIAN COURIER
PER/BX/9401/.C36
APR 2 2 2008

April 14, 2008

No. 2838 $2.00

You have ascended on high... p.11

Reformed Christians launch association for higher learning ...p.5

62nd year of publication

Tibet's long quarrel with China

Harry der Nederlanden

The Chinese government has been accusing the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile of fomenting demonstrations against Beijing and violent attacks on Chinese living in Tibet. The demonstrations, Beijing claims, were timed to embarrass China on the eve of the Olympics and to subvert them.

However, the Dalai Lama was quickly calling for a cessation of the violence on the part of both sides. He has not been calling for Tibetans to agitate for independence. In several speeches given before the international community, the Dalai Lama has pleaded for a certain degree of autonomy for Tibet, while leaving security and foreign policy in the hands of the Chinese.

He is not only under pressure from China, however. Young Tibetan radicals are not happy with his moderate approach. They want complete independence from China. Some even want areas included that have not been part of Tibet but which have a predominantly Tibetan population. A member of the youth congress charged that in setting aside the demand for independence, the government-in-exile is "betraying the call of the nation."

The Dalai Lama has encouraged democratic reforms in his government and has urged his people not to rely on him for political leadership but only for spiritual leadership. He has told them, "Work as if there is no Dalai Lama." However, many Tibetans cling to the ideal of a "theocracy" under the Dalai Lama.

The last time Beijing quashed Tibetan protests was in 1989. But there is a very long history between the two. Tibetans point out that their country was independent before the communist government invaded and overran their country in 1950. Beijing, however, points out that Tibet has been part of China since the thirteenth century. In 1913, after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in China, Tibet declared its independence, expelling all Chinese officials and residents from Lhasa, the holy city.

After the Chinese invasion, however, representatives of the Dalai Lama signed an agreement granting China sovereignty over the country. The Tibetans had little choice in the matter. The agreement stated that China would not alter the political system in Tibet or interfere with the status of the Dalai Lama and the practice of religion. When the Chinese did not honor this agreement, Tibetans revolted in 1959. The Dalai Lama and some 80,000 Tibetans fled. Thousands of others were executed, imprisoned and starved to death in prison camps.

In 1966 Mao launched the so-called Cultural Revolution across China. All religious activities were prohibited and the monastic system in Tibet dismantled. Tibetan monks were subjected to constant harassment and humiliation.

PHOTOS BY MARK SAPPENFIELD

Lhakpa Tsering, cultural secretary, Tibetan Youth Congress.

Parliament is the white building in the center. The Dalai Lama has set up his government-in-exile in the Indian hill town of Dharamsala. Recent reforms have substantially democratized the government, which is now at the center of the debate over whether to be more aggressive with China on the issue of Tibet or to follow the Dalai Lama's "Middle Path" of dialogue and reconciliaton.

In 1979 Chinese authorities initiated a more moderate policy, permitting Tibetans to revitalize their culture and religion. After pro-independence demonstrations ten years later, however, Beijing once again clamped down, curtailing religious and cultural freedoms. Chinese citizens were also encouraged to migrate to Tibet, and they did so in large numbers. The population of Lhasa, for example, is now estimated to be 70-80 percent Chinese. The best jobs go to the Chinese, in part because Tibetans have not had access to the education and training of the Chinese.

Schools in Tibet tend to impose the Chinese language and suppress Tibetan customs and religion. Although formally Tibetans have been granted freedom of religion, civil servants can be fired if a Buddhist shrine is found in their home. Portraits of the Dalai Lama are prohibited.

Donald Lopez, professor of Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan, said, "All the jobs are held by Chinese. The businesses in the main square in front of the most sacred Tibetan temple are Chinese. You can imagine the resentment this generates." Lacking equality in education, Tibetans are at a severe disadvantage and cannot compete with the influx of Chinese migrants.

Little wonder then that the Dalai Lama speaks of an orchestrated attempt by the Chinese to commit "cultural genocide" in Tibet.

However, even among Chinese on the street there is little sympathy for the Tibetan demands for greater independence. To give up Tibet would be a humiliation in their eyes. Few analysts see any chance that China will grant Tibet any form of independence. In fact, in the past such demonstrations have only prompted Beijing to clamp down and curtail freedoms.

In Zimbabwe, bread costs Z$10 million

With inflation at 100,000 percent, few can afford even basic goods.

Scott Baldauf

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – In her pink-and-yellow Indian sari, Neeti Patel sees the customers come into her shop, look longingly at the sandwiches, and walk back out empty handed.

It's not that her prices are high – a sausage sandwich sells for a mere 30 million Zimbabwe dollars, or about $1.25. The problem is that Zimbabwe's skyrocketing inflation – now the world's highest, running at more than 100,000 percent a year – keeps her costs rising. A 30-pound bag of potatos cost 90 million in the first week of March. Now that same bag costs 160 million, and her potential customers simply don't have the money.

"We have to put the prices up, but then people cannot manage to pay us," sighs Ms. Patel, who moved to Zimbabwe with her husband six months ago from India, assuming that this southern African nation would present the same opportunities to her as it has for generations of Indian shopkeepers.

Zimbabwe *continued on page 3*

News

Amid human rights protests, a look at China's record

Peter Ford

The international torch relay for the Beijing Olympic Games has been besieged in almost every city it has visited so far by protesters against repression in Tibet and human rights violations in China. But what is the human rights picture really like in China, and how has it changed over the past quarter of a century?

As with so much else in China, the situation is mixed, sometimes confused, and often hard to make out with precision. Some observers like to point to the progress China has made toward international norms; others prefer to stress how far it still is from reaching them.

The imminence of the Games, and the Chinese government's effort to use them as a showcase for its achievements, have polarized the debate. Here, the *Monitor* tries to cut through the rhetoric with an outline explanation of the key issues.

•What kind of freedoms do Chinese people enjoy in their personal lives?

"Nothing we do today was possible 25 years ago. Compared with then, the human rights situation in China has improved like never before."

And that enthusiastic assessment comes from a man who was fired from his job in 2006 as editor of a Communist youth newspaper for publishing an article that contradicted the party line, Li Datong.

But the baseline, he points out, was pretty low. "In 1983, I would probably have been arrested."

Twenty-five years ago, Chinese citizens were not free to choose their jobs: The authorities assigned them work for life. Farmers were forbidden to live anywhere but the village where they were born. Nobody was allowed to travel abroad, except on government-authorized business. Nobody could dream of owning a car, let alone a house. Food was rationed. Nobody was allowed to set up a business. Western movies and books were banned.

Today, all that has changed. And as the state has relaxed its control over the minutiae of daily life, citizens have also felt freer to express themselves to each other. Among friends and neighbors, Chinese say what they think about everything, from their political leaders to rising prices to their country's medal chances at the Beijing Olympics.

•So where's the problem?

The boulevard of freedoms that Chinese people enjoy may have widened, but it is still lined with precipices. You may be able to criticize the ruling Communist Party over dinner with friends, but airing such views in public – for example on the Internet – can earn you years of prison time.

You would not get a chance to run that risk anywhere else: all newspapers and TV and radio stations are owned by the government and edited by men and women who know where the red lines are drawn. Each time a new issue comes up, the Communist Party propaganda department sends them a directive telling them the line to take.

Busy street in Bejing

Freedom of speech is guaranteed in the constitution. But it is upheld only for those who do not challenge Communist Party rule. Communist Party security agents decide what constitutes a challenge.

Certainly you cannot call for free elections or a multiparty state, or criticize party leaders by name. Nor can you advocate independence for Tibet, or Taiwan's right to self-rule. Nor can you try to set up an independent trade union.

On other issues, "it's like crossing the stream by feeling where the rocks are," says John Kamm, a human rights advocate who heads the San Francisco-based Dui Hua Foundation.

Citizens who have slipped off the rocks, and ended up in jail, include land rights activists, practitioners of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, tenants protesting eviction from their homes by developers, defense lawyers, and Tibetan Buddhists and Muslim Uighurs demanding more respect for their cultures and religions, members of Christian churches not authorized by the state, and anticorruption campaigners, among others.

Often they are convicted of endangering state security by inciting subversion or separatism: Mr. Kamm estimates that 4,000 prisoners are serving sentences for such crimes, of which outsiders know the names of only a few hundred.

•Has China's role as Olympic host this year encouraged the authorities to improve their human rights record?

No. If anything it seems to have made things worse, as the Chinese government tries to ensure a "harmonious" event.

The international human rights watchdog Amnesty International says in a recent report that "the crackdown on peaceful activists has intensified as a direct result of China's hosting of the Olympic Games. Several of the activists ... have been targeted because they have explicitly linked human rights and the Olympics, and have been among the most harshly treated."

The government's own statistics show that 742 people were arrested for "endangering state security" last year – more than double the 2005 figure, and the highest number since 1999.

•What chance of a fair trial do you stand in China?

Companies with commercial cases before the courts say Chinese judges are becoming more professional and fairer – unless a state-owned business is involved, in which case it can generally expect favorable treatment.

In criminal and political cases, however, sentences are decided not by judges but by a court committee named by the Communist Party. Verdicts sometimes appear to have been reached before the formality of a court hearing: human rights activist Hu Jia's recent trial lasted only four hours, and his defense lawyer was allowed to speak for just 30 minutes.

At least he had a lawyer, which would have been unthinkable for a dissident 25 years ago. But lawyers taking such cases have to be brave: Advocate Gao Zhisheng was beaten up and abducted for a month last year – apparently by plainclothesmen – after writing an open letter to the US Congress denouncing "China's ongoing human rights disaster." Two other prominent rights lawyers, Teng Biao and Li Heping, have suffered similar fates in recent months: others have been jailed or put under house arrest.

The Chinese police are not always very particular about how they extract confessions: A United Nations report in 2006 found that torture in police stations was declining but still "widespread."

The police do not always bother to go to court with their suspects. The law allows them to sentence anyone to up to three years of "reeducation through labor," an administrative punishment against which there is no appeal. Local authorities often use it against land rights activists, petitioners drawing Beijing's attention to injustices, and other troublesome types.

•How many people do Chinese courts condemn to death each year?

Nobody knows for sure because the government keeps the figure a secret, but foreign experts with good contacts in the Chinese judiciary estimate that between 5,000 and 6,000 people were given the death penalty last year. Though 25 countries today practiced capital punishment in 2006, China was by far the heaviest user – it was responsible for two-thirds of the world's confirmed executions, according to Amnesty International.

The Chinese Supreme Court is making an effort to bring the numbers down, by insisting on reviewing all death penalty sentences imposed by lower courts. Ten years ago, as many as 15,000 people a year were being sentenced to death, according to foreign estimates.

Some Chinese academics and jurists have argued publicly in favor of abolishing the death penalty. The authorities have shown no sign of being ready to do that.

Peter Ford is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

News

Preaching to the choir

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

Since 1976, when presidential aspirant Jimmy Carter openly professed to be a born-again Christian, religion has been a feature of virtually every US election campaign – something that was generally not the case before that year. Thus it is not surprising that Barack Obama's pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, should come under such intense public scrutiny during this year's presidential contest.

Last year I visited the website of Obama's church, Trinity United Church of Christ, located in the heavily black south side of Chicago (http://www.tucc.org/home.htm). After perusing this site, it became clear to me that the media would eventually pick up on it and focus on its more controversial elements.

Trinity Church's website acknowledges, with W. E. B. DuBois, that the "color line" became the problem of the twentieth century: "Our job as servants of God is to address that problem and eradicate it in the name of Him who came for the whole world by calling all men, women, boys and girls to Christ." So far so good.

Nevertheless, despite this admirable focus on eradicating old racial boundaries, Trinity claims that "We are an African people, and remain 'true to our native land,' the mother continent, the cradle of civilization" and to the "Black Value System." I figured that, at the very least, the media would draw attention to this evident tension in the church's identity and mission.

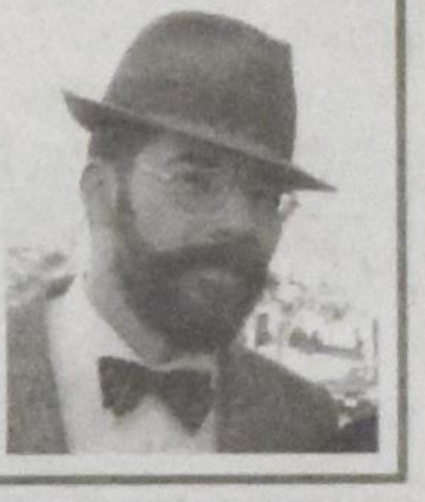
Yet it was Wright himself who caught the public eye, due to his incendiary sermons calling down God's damnation on America for its racial injustice and claiming that AIDS is a white plot to decimate the black community.

When I heard excerpts from Wright's sermons, I myself was disturbed, but not for the same reasons as Fox News. Recognizing that God judges nations is not unusual (though I suspect that references to divine judgement are rare in other UCC congregations). What bothered me more is that, far from being prophetic, Wright was doing no more than to feed the prejudices of his congregation by "prophesying" against people and forces outside his fold.

Wright is not alone. More than two decades ago I once turned on the television to see the late Dr. D. James Kennedy preaching to the congregation of his Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Florida. I no longer recall from which biblical text, if any, he claimed to be preaching, but the sermon was devoted to the evils of communism. When he had finished, he received a standing ovation. It seemed a cheap way to get applause by preaching against something of which no one in his audience was guilty!

There is, of course, a time and place for alerting people to the evils of racism, communism and other ideologies, as I do in my book. All the same, the pulpit is not the proper place for airing one's own highly contestable opinions, much less for endorsing candidates for public office. The pastor has a high calling to preach the word of God to his people, and he or she abuses that calling by doing anything less.

Instead, truly prophetic preachers, while not avoiding political topics, will challenge their parishioners to repent from sin, to accept God's forgiveness and to live the redeemed life in Jesus Christ. This life certainly has social and political implications. The gospel is not merely a private message and must challenge the spirits of the age. For this very reason the minister of the gospel cannot afford to leave parishioners where they are, confirming them in their previously held opinions. He or she must announce the transforming power of the gospel to change lives and to bring genuine reconciliation.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and freely admits that he has a better grasp of politics than of homiletics.

Zimbabwe *continued from page 1*

Downtown Harare

"But if we don't raise our prices up, we don't see any profit. We didn't think it would be like this."

There are plenty of theories for why Zimbabwe has descended from Southern Africa's breadbasket to its basket case. Western economists blame the socialist-inspired redistribution of commercial farms by President Robert Mugabe to his cronies and supporters. Mr. Mugabe's supporters blame Western governments, which withdrew economic aid in response to Mugabe's human rights violations. Whatever the cause, the hardship of ordinary Zimbabweans is easy to see in their shops and homes, and difficult to resolve as long as Mugabe and his supporters stay in power.

"It's really frightening what the future holds for people," says Paul Siwela, an economist in Bulawayo, an opposition stronghold. Ethnic purges against Zimbabwe's own people, combined with attacks against white commercial farmers has sent much of the country's skilled manpower elsewhere. "In the last eight years, the economy has contracted to 60 percent of what it was before."

Shifting blame?

Supporters of Mugabe, who faces the strongest-ever challenge to his 28-year presidency in election run-off, blame the country's economic woes on Britain, its former colonial ruler. But Mr. Siwela says most of the country's problems are self-inflicted.

Economic sanctions levied by Western countries on Mugabe's regime don't explain a huge growth in government spending which now equals nearly 60 percent of the total gross domestic product, he says.

With a manufacturing industry now operating at just five percent of capacity – largely due to a lack of reliable electricity and water – there are fewer taxes to pay for that spending, and Zimbabwe has fallen deeper into debt.

Most troubling, however, is the way Zimbabwe lost its ability to feed itself, and the region. In 1979, when Mugabe's nationalist rebels overthrew the white-dominated government of Rhodesia, and changed the name of the country to Zimbabwe, thousands of commercial farms managed to grow enough food to export throughout the region. Today, more than a decade of mismanagement and neglect have dropped agricultural production to precolonial levels.

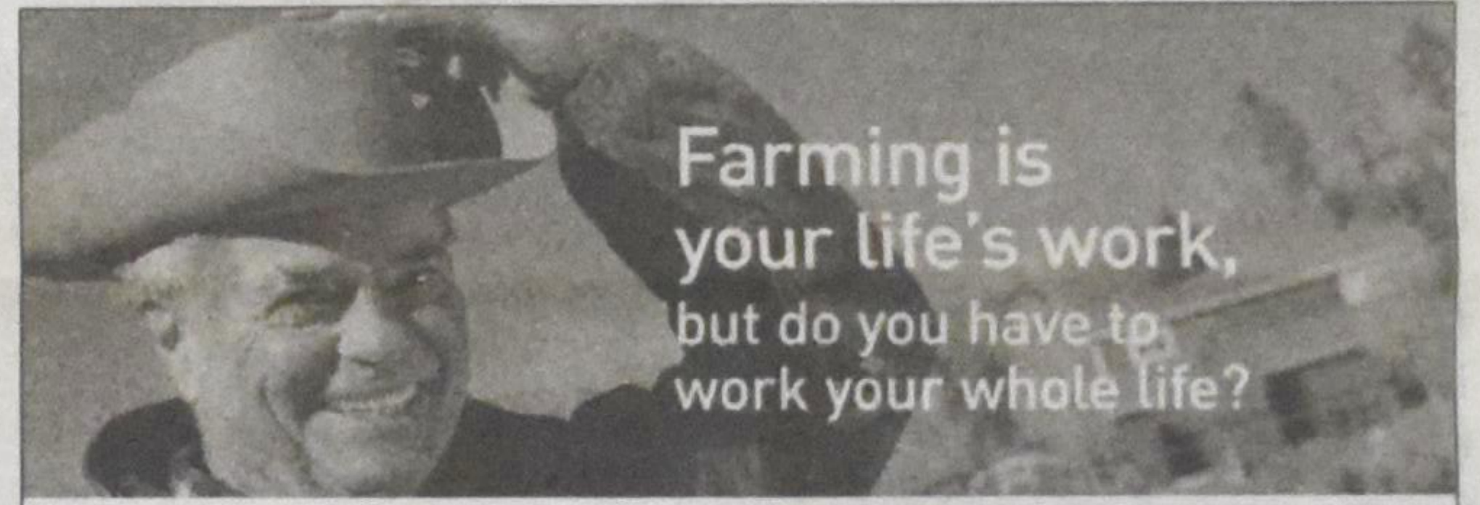
This year, Zimbabwe's shortfall in maize is 360,000 tons, and its shortfall in wheat is 255,000 tons. Food aid, from friendly neighbors, from the United Nations' World Food Program, and from individual family members living in neighboring countries, will help to stave off starvation – for a while.

If most of Zimbabwe's economic misery is self-inflicted, as many economists say, then the solutions also come from within. One senior economic adviser to the government, speaking on condition of anonymity, says that the first step for Zimbabwe is to "liberalize everything."

Solutions must come from within

"First, you have to allow people to trade their

Zimbabwe *continued on page 4*



You've operated a successful farm and you deserve to enjoy retirement. Perhaps you're unsure how to remove yourself from the operation and ensure that it remains viable. If another family member takes over, it's important to know what your options are, and what the potential tax implications may be. Equally important is the manner in which the rest of your estate will be divided among your children. There are ways to make succession fair for all concerned. I can help you find them.

Call us to find out how The Plan™ can help you prosper now... and over time.

CLARENCE WEIMA CFP
Executive Financial Consultant
1-800-488-9817 (home)
clarence.weima@investorsgroup.com

The Plan by Investors Group

Investors Group Financial Services Inc.

ESCORTED TOURS IN 2008

Tour Escort: Earl Clint

You are invited to join us on our fabulous escorted tours In 2008. Enjoy wonderful group fellowship as you travel!

NEWFOUNDLAND – July 4 - 12

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE & ROME
Sept.19 - Oct.3 Includes 2 nights in Rome. Fabulous Ports.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FUNDRAISER TOURS

We also offer tours to Washington, New York City, Ontario Resorts, Chicago, Quebec City & Eastern Ontario, and more.

Give us a call for more details and a brochure.

VERSTRAETE TRAVEL & CRUISES
36 Secord Dr., St.Catharines, ON
Tel: 905- 934-4414 or 1-800-405-6088

Visit us at: www.verstraetetravel.com

Guest editorial

In praise of unity in diversity

John Bolt

There is much to be said in favor of the currently fashionable emphasis on diversity. We are all enriched by authentic engagement with different cultures. They give us new perspectives, fresh angles on the human experience of living in God's polychrome world. When we consider that each of us has a unique fingerprint and DNA we begin to grasp how much God loves diversity. None of us desires to go back to black and white television; how could we possibly prefer cultural insulation and isolation.

Diversity in catholicity

For Christians who take seriously the catholicity of the church, the gain is obvious. The rhythms, music, and dance of Africa, the deep wisdom of Asia, the Pentecostal passion of Latin America – when included with Bach, Handel and American gospel, with the Christian appropriation of Plato and Aristotle, with the spirituality of the Franciscans, the Dutch Second Reformation, the Great Awakening, Korean prayer warriors and Billy Graham – all this enriches us beyond our capacity to take it all in.

And yet . . . diversity as we experience it today is a mixed blessing, shining discovery joined with shadowy politics. How did such a clearly beneficial emphasis become problematic for us? How did we manage to turn multi-culturalism into an ugly ideology; how did we subvert a plea for greater openness and understanding into a political hustle for power? How did we turn Dutch Calvinists who love the Genevan Psalms and were beginning to enjoy and even (slowly!) sway and clap to gospel, how did they morph into people aggravated by Al Sharpton?

Those who push diversity very hard are quick to point the finger at unresolved racism as the reason. They are probably not altogether wrong; the sin of racism is not far from any one of us and we need to acknowledge its lurking presence. Reformed folk, after all, are Augustinians and Calvinists, not Wesleyan perfectionists in their understanding of original sin.

All the same, I believe there is a profound and positive reason for being uncomfortable with diversity as it is currently understood and promoted in society and church. The qualification is critical because the lingering question I have is whether there is any unity left after we have exalted diversity. Are those factors that distinguish us really greater than those that unite us as human beings, as fellow image bearers of God? And if we become uncomfortable with that conclusion, should the church not be proclaiming unity before emphasizing diversity – a unity by virtue of creation and then also a deeper unity in Christ?

The fundamental question I believe properly posed to diversity advocates today is: Do you believe that there is a fundamental and prior unity underlying all diversity in God's creation? Do you believe that what we have in common with each other, universally, is far more important than those things that distinguish us from each other? For the Christian church, it seems to me, the answer is a clear YES!

So let me state my understanding of this as a constructive principle, one rooted in a deep conviction about God himself: All diversity is grounded in and must therefore serve the prior unity of God, his world, his truth, and the humanity he created for his glory. I claim no originality for this affirmation; I learned it from Herman Bavinck. As I spend more and more time with my teacher, I am increasingly convinced that the socio-cultural, political, and intellectual issues we face today – the so-called challenge of post-modernism, for example – are really not all that new. Bavinck was aware of the tendency of modernity to drift toward nominalism and relativism as it jettisoned the intellectual moorings of Christian conviction about God and the world.

Put very simply – as the founders of modern science knew well – for us to be persuaded that our senses give us reliable knowledge about the world and that the scientific knowledge we accumulate is a reliable correspondence to reality, we need to believe that the universe is a creation and a cosmos, not a chaos. The order in the cosmos makes it possible to form universal concepts that are true. In what seems initially a counter-intuitive suggestion, Bavinck insists that when we "entertain concepts we are not distancing ourselves from reality but we increasingly approximate it." (Reformed Dogmatics, I, 231) To abandon this conviction is to retreat into skepticism.

Unity in God

For Bavinck, the conviction that there is a deeper unity undergirding all diversity is finally grounded in the Christian belief that God has revealed himself to us as One Being, yet in three persons: "Just as God is one in essence and distinct in persons, so also the work of creation is one and undivided, while in its unity it is still rich in diversity." (*Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 422) And in another place: "The unity and diversity in the works of God proceeds from and returns to the unity and diversity which exist in the Divine Being." (*Our Reasonable Faith*, 144)

This fundamental conviction is the basis of a Christian worldview. The unity of God points to the unity of the human race created in the divine image. There is, Bavinck argues, no other foundation for international law. There is no other possible ground for international justice than the conviction, articulated in the American Declaration of Independence, that "all men are created equal" and for that reason have "inalienable rights." Without such a basic belief, international relations become nothing more than power plays; the world becomes a **Hobbesian** jungle where the fittest survive and the weak are exterminated.

Only the Christian doctrine of creation, accompanied by a belief in the catholicity of the church, is capable of creating a just international order: "International justice ultimately rests (and must rest), either implicitly or explicitly, on two pillars: the Christian principle of the oneness of the human race in origin and essence, and the principle of the catholicity of God's kingdom." (*Essays on Religion, Science and Society*, ed. J. Bolt, trans. H. Boonstra and G. Sheeres [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 277)

I believe that this means we need to reconsider our push toward diversity. Not that we should deny diversity or fail to celebrate it in appropriate ways. However, diversity for its own sake will always disappoint and fail to achieve social good if it is not grounded in a prior conviction about unity. Our diversity rests in unity because God is one, his truth is one, the human race is one, the holy, catholic church is one.

First posted on crconnect: crconnect.blogspot.com/

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to: report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective; provide contact for the Christian community.

EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by *Christian Courier* or the publisher. Please contact circulation if you cannot afford the subscription price but want to receive *Christian Courier*.

Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N1V1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375

We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs. Canada

Zimbabwe *continued from page 3*

Zimbabwe dollars freely, and buy their goods in US dollars. Then you have to look at the government deficit, the whole government budget, including the parastatal companies (such as electric utilities) and the central government. You add it all up, and subtract what you get in revenues, and then you have to bring the difference down."

The stark inequities of the current system of cronyism mean that most people will benefit from a wholesale change in the economy, the adviser says. "It will be painful as you liberalize, but when you liberalize, you are also taking away the risk of doing what people are already doing," such as illegally trading their Zimbabwe dollars for US dollars at black market rates. "It's almost like lifting a giant tax on everybody, because you will be taking that risk away."

A stroll through a regional capital like Bulawayo shows that there is food on the shelves, but all of it highly priced. Massive department stores, built for a time when farmers from miles around would come to do their weekend shopping, are full of clothes, but without customers.

Gas stations have closed down entirely, and most people who can afford it buy fuel from roving bands of illegal fuel salesmen, who ladle out gasoline by the liter and even by the spoonful.

At a local greengrocer, 12 million dollars (50 cents US) buys you a head of wilted lettuce. Ten million dollars will buy a loaf of bread (40 cents US), if you can find any. These prices are now beyond the reach of most Zimbabweans

"We've gone two months without butter," says Sihle, a former schoolteacher from Bulawayo. "For the common man, it's much worse."

The rooms of her apartment show photos of happier times. Now, teachers like Sihle are quitting their jobs, when their 400 million-dollar salary fails to pay for taxi fare to and from school, let alone grocery bills.

With cash almost a worthless possession, Sihle has invested her savings in something more meaningful. She stacks bags of maize meal six feet high and five feet wide in her bedroom, enough to last for months.

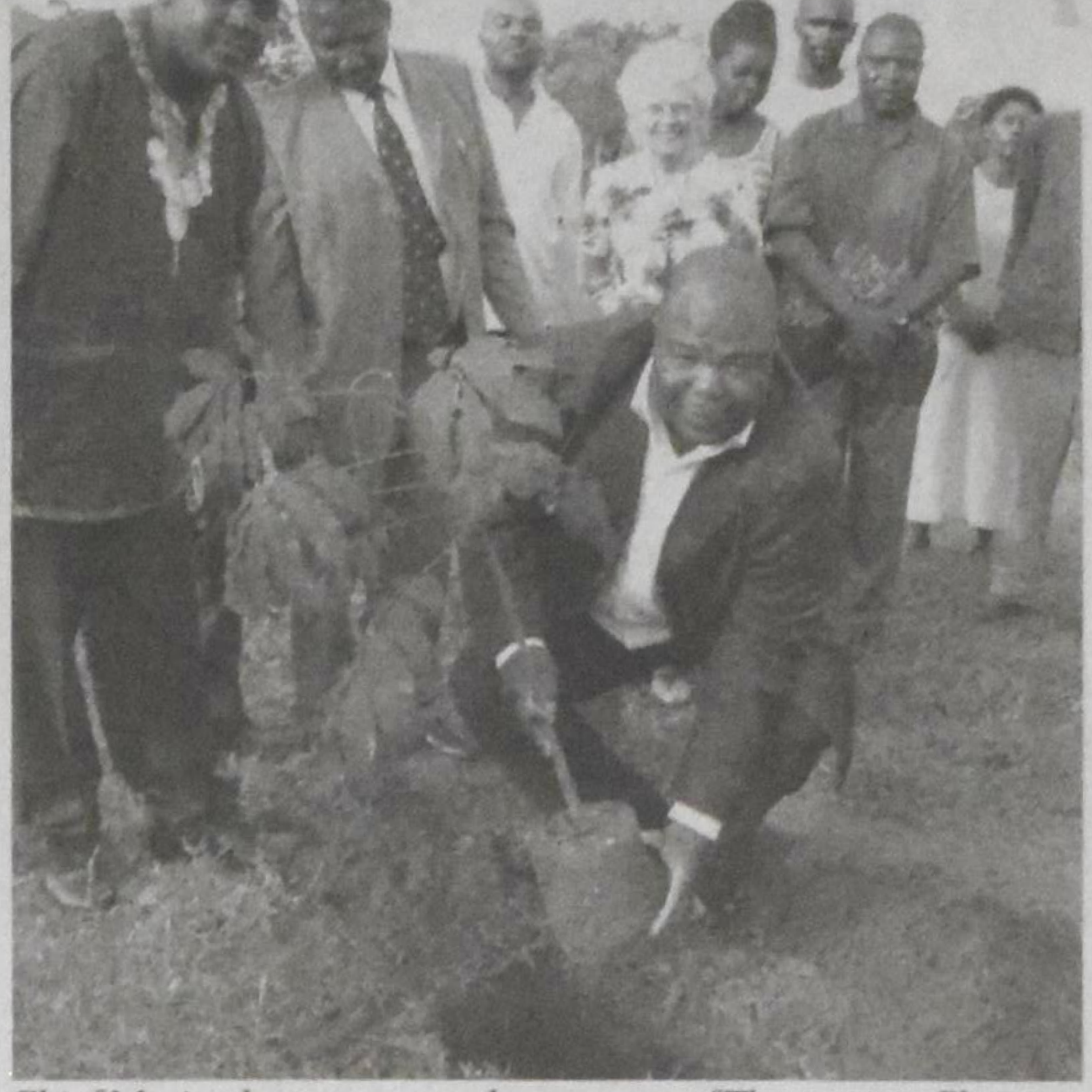
"I've never seen a country that doesn't appreciate professionals," she says. "There's no point taking your kid to school. For what? In this economy, if you see someone selling tomatoes cheaper, you buy them and sell them again to get money. Now everyone is a commodities broker."

Scott Baldauf is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

News

Reformed Christians launch association for higher learning

Some of the guests gathered after the meeting for a "Tree of Life" planting ceremony.



Chief Masia plants a tree on the property of Theocentric Christian College in the area where TICSA hopes to build its facilities.

Bert Witvoet

MASIA, South Africa (CC News)– Black leaders of the Reformed community in South Africa have decided that the time has come to start a Christian institute for higher learning in South Africa. At the moment there is no Christian university in South Africa, even though the country is dotted with hundreds of churches of the Reformed persuasion. What used to be a Christian university, Potchefstroom University near Johannesburg, no longer can lay claim to that title. Under pressure from the post-Apartheid government, Potchefstroom agreed to relinquish its Christian designation as long as it was allowed to maintain Afrikaans as the language of instruction. It also had to join Northwest University in order to be eligible for government funding.

So on March 31 of this year, about 80 teachers, pastors and members of the local Reformed community met together to witness the unveiling of plans to establish the Tree of Life Institute for Christian Studies in Africa (TICSA) in July of 2009. Dr. Derrick Mashau, chair of Missiology at Northwest University, presented the vision and plans for TICSA. In the first years of its existence, TICSA will focus on providing teacher training for prospective teachers and teachers already serving in Christian schools, pastoral training in the area of pastoral ministry, counseling and Christian witness, and community leadership and development training from a Reformational worldview. Another objective of the Institute will be to impact the world through vigorous Christian scholarship.

Rural location

The site for the future Institute has already been decided. The local chief, Chief Masia, who took part in the tree-planting ceremony after the meeting of March 31, had already donated 20 hectares of land to Theocentric Christian College, a K-12 school. Its board has agreed to cede a large tract of that land to TICSA. Since the land is free and since building facilities in a sub-tropical climate is not terribly expensive, the Institute is well on its way to make its dreams come true of starting classes in July of 2009, the start of a new semester in South Africa.

To those who raised the question of why such an institute would be established in a rural area rather than in a city like Johannesburg, which is close to an international airport, Mashau pointed out the high cost of real estate near the cities, the lack of safety for international guests, and the fact that rural Limpopo is heavily populated and has seen a tremendous growth of Christian schools. Most of the thousands of teachers and prospective teachers in Limpopo cannot afford to travel to the cities or reside in them.

One of the immediate objectives of the organizers is to appoint a national and an international development director. The association hopes to recruit Friends of TICSA locally, nationally continentally and internationally (both in North America and in The Netherlands).

Tree analogy

Mr. Samson Makhado, who some years ago studied at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, and who is now African director of the Association for Christian Schools International, believes that the West will need Africa some day to reinvigorate its institutions for Christian education. He pointed out to those in attendance at the unveiling of TICSA that the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone has 6,000 Christian schools. But all these newly established places of learning cry out for leadership in developing Christian curricula and training Christian teachers. "If education is like a tree," he said, "then Christian schools in The Netherlands have shallow roots and withered branches. Christian schools in North America have deep roots but the leaves are beginning to wilt. In Africa we have shallow roots but flourishing branches and leaves."

According to Dr. Mashau, "Africa is racing against time. The increasing threat of secularization and Islamization gives Christianity a narrow window in which to establish deep roots for its Christian schools." In order to stay ahead of the race, TICSA needs help from the international community. Although the country has a strong presence of white Reformed churches, members of these churches are not used to paying for independent Christian schools. In the past, schools that taught in Afrikaans automatically included teaching of the Christian religion. However, it cannot be said that such teaching included a vital reformational perspective about the lordship of Christ over all areas of life, according to Dr. Mashau. "At this time the teaching in Afrikaans affords Reformed parents a form of protection against a breakdown of discipline and morality as witnessed in many public schools, but the use of Afrikaans also continues to build a wall between white and black Reformed schools," Mashau believes.

With this in mind, an appeal will be made to the international community, in particular to the supporters of Christian education in Canada, the United States, and the Netherlands. Chapters of "Friends of TICSA" will be established in these countries, as well as in other countries of Africa and in South Africa itself. The Limpopo Team of Christian Educators from Canada, consisting of Peter Van Huizen and Peter Roukema (British Columbia), and Marc and Dora Stroobosscher, Ike and Jennie Witteveen, and Bert and Alice Witvoet (Ontario) is expected to play a supportive role in establishing these chapters.

Dr. Mashau lays out the plans for TICSA.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

Canada Mail:
PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40009999
REGISTRATION NO. 9375
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
CHRISTIAN COURIER
5 JOANNA DR
ST. CATHARINES ON L2N 1V1
email: **subscriptions@christiancourier.ca**

U.S. Mail:
Christian Courier
(USPS 518-090)
Second-class postage paid at Lewiston NY
Postmaster: send address changes to: Christian Courier, Box 110 Lewiston NY 14092

Subscriptions:	**Canada (G.S.T. incl.)**	**USA**	**Overseas**
one yr. (25 issues)	$44.00	$44.00 US	$85.00
two yrs. (50 issues)	$85.00	$85.00 US	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca
Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca

PRINTED IN CANADA

Family

Adoption: designed by God

Della vanDokkumburg

Before my husband and I married twenty-one years ago, our premarital counselor asked us if we had considered having children. Up to that point, we honestly hadn't talked about it, but in the weeks that followed, we shared together our thoughts on having kids, and discussed how many we'd like to have. We even broached the subject of adoption, but the outcome of those discussions was, 'maybe sometime….'

Throughout the next nine years, I became pregnant and gave birth to three children. Though we had planned to have four kids, three difficult pregnancies put that number out of reach. We almost succeeded in convincing ourselves that three was our number of completion, but a niggling thought kept returning to us: our family was not yet whole.

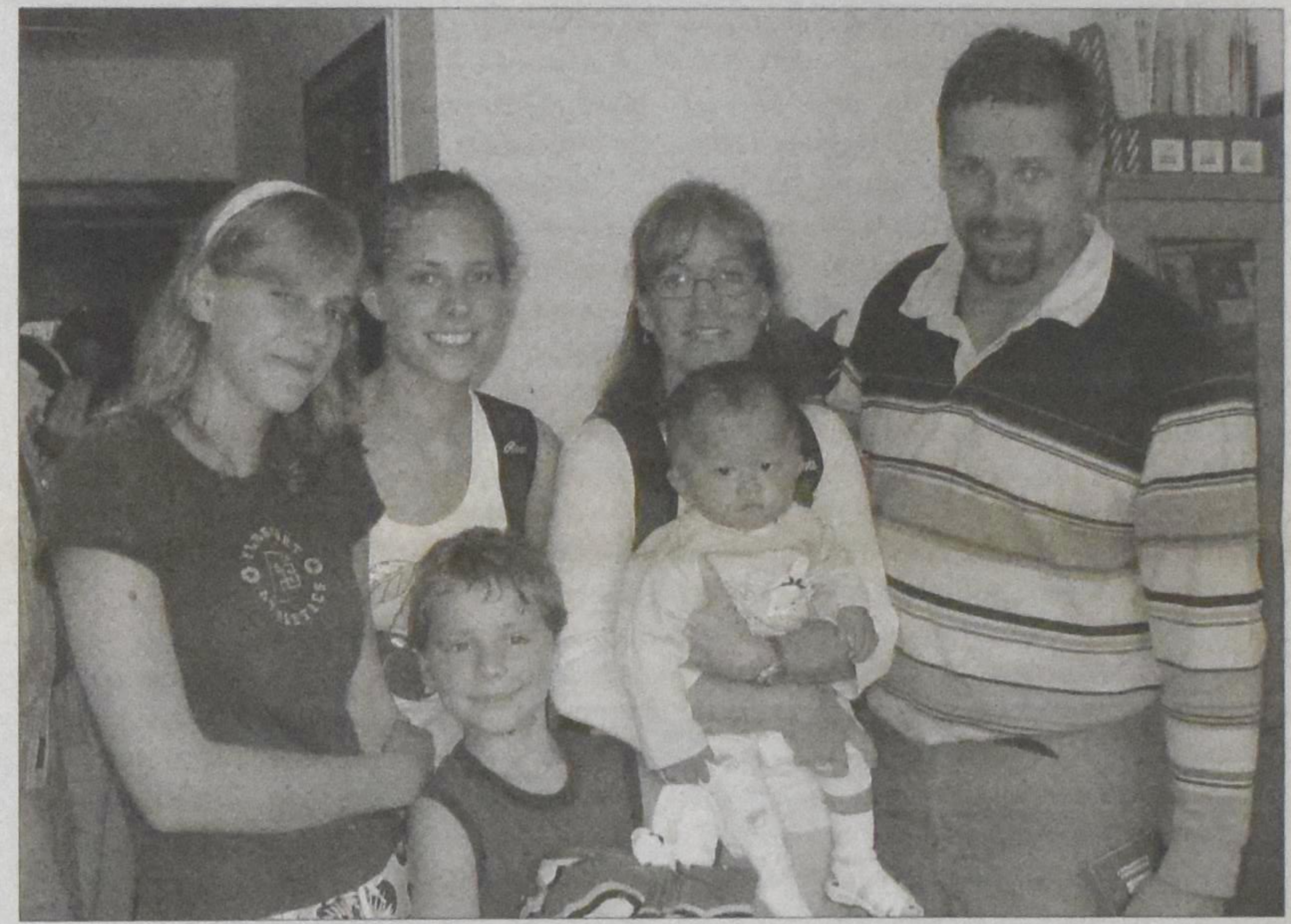
In 1997 we moved to Europe for eighteen months. While we were away, our church in Canada called a new pastor, whose family befriended ours when we returned. They had two lovely adopted daughters, the elder from Romania, and the younger from China. As they embarked on their third adoption adventure, we became actively involved in the process, and my husband and I reminded each other of the discussions we had early in our marriage. Slowly we realized that there were more ways to grow a family. When our friends came home from China with their third daughter – in the middle of the SARS crisis – we were undaunted. We decided that we would adopt our fourth child.

Contrary to what most people experience with adoption, time flew by. It took only thirteen months from the beginning of our home study to returning home from China with our daughter, Danielle. Despite my fears of attachment disorder, Danielle bonded with me almost instantly. She took her time attaching to my husband, however. While they slowly became friends, I bore the sole responsibility for her every need. In the beginning, bedtimes were difficult. Each night, I sang to her while I rocked her to sleep, and continued to sing as I gently laid her in her crib and slowly inched my way out of her bedroom. In the weeks following our return home, numerous people congratulated us on the addition of Danielle to our family, and many would add, "It's wonderful that you adopted her; you didn't have to do it." The latter part of that phrase, "you didn't have to do it," kept running through my mind, and I started to believe it.

As my evening ritual with Danielle continued, eventually a song based on Ephesians 1:3, 4, 5, and 7 began to take shape. I had heard a sermon preached on this text, and somehow the words had embedded themselves in my brain:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.



Family picture after adoption

This creed-like passage reminded me that adoption is a God-designed act. By adopting, we were given the unique opportunity to model a human version of what God has done for us. But this passage also helped me realize that I was mistaken in believing that nobody had expected us to adopt Danielle. Indeed, before the world began, God had ordained that we would be Danielle's parents, just as he had ordained that we would be parents to our three other children. By adopting, we were being obedient to God.

Danielle's Adoption Lullaby soon became the nightly lead-off number before I delved into the repertoire of every children's song I knew, and I sang it at Danielle's baptism, too. The words are still a powerful reminder to me of just how I got to be in God's family. From time to time Danielle requests the song, and she's slowly learning the words. By doing so, I trust she's making them her own.

Almost three years have passed since we brought Danielle home. We marvel at how this child, who at one year of age did not yet know how to crawl or laugh, has transformed before our very eyes into a vibrant and active little girl. And we are humbled that we were chosen to be her parents.

Adoption Lullaby

You were adopted in our family;
Forever joined to each other we'll be.
Travelled the world now you're finally home;
Share in our life you're no longer alone.
Open your heart to us, trust in our care;
Know that forever we'll always be there.

You were adopted in God's family;
At the beginning He knew it would be.
In God's great wisdom your life he did claim;
Your heavenly Father knows you by name.
Open your heart to your Saviour and Lord;
Trust in him always and follow his Word.

We're all adopted in God's family;
Through love we're united at Calvary.
The sacraments show us the wonder of grace;
How Jesus the Lamb of God died in our place.
We've opened our hearts to him, joined now in praise;
He gives us his blessings through all of our days.

REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Put your investment to work for a wonderful Kingdom cause!

Competitive Rates - 4.00% to 4.30%*
5 Year Term
Interest paid semi-annually

Current rates subject to change

For Information Call: 1-877-779-0913 ext. 4205

*Other rates apply for RRSP/RIF plans

777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4
www.redeemer.ca

Tel: 905-648-2131
Fax: 905-648-2134
stewardship@redeemer.ca

Religious Liberty: the pivotal issue in these pivotal days – Apostasy, and the baptism of Madgi Allam

Elizabeth Kendal

AUSTRALIA (ANS) – Historically the outcome of pivotal moments in Christian-Muslim relations have been determined by military might: the Arab Muslim conquest of the Byzantine Jerusalem (AD 638); the Arab Muslim conquest of Byzantine Heliopolis; Egypt (AD 640); the Ottoman Muslim conquest of Byzantine Serbian Kosovo (1389); the Ottoman Muslim capture of the capital of Byzantium, Constantinople (1453); the European victory over the Ottomans in the Battle of Vienna (1683); the Serb re-conquest of Kosovo (1913); the Allied victory over the Ottomans in WW1 (1919); the Allied victory over the Muslim-Nazi Alliance in WW2 (1945); the NATO-enabled Muslim re-reconquest of Kosovo (1998-2008). These battles and many others like them demonstrated who was ascendant and determined who was in control.

For several decades now the West has been advancing global openness through its revolution in communication and information technologies. But openness poses an existential threat to repressive dictatorships, corrupt systems and false religions. Now, in a fight for their survival, repressive dictatorships, corrupt systems and false religions are seeking to protect themselves by rolling back liberties and erecting bulwarks: repressing information and punishing dissent.

Because Islam is a global as distinct from a local phenomenon, the apostaphobic dictators of Islam are of necessity forced to pursue not only a revival of repressive, punitive Sharia in Muslim countries, but the extension of Sharia beyond the Muslim world and into the international arena through the Islamisation of human rights and laws. To this end, they use the threat of "uncontrollable" Islamic violence as leverage.

Today we are again at a pivotal moment in Christian-Muslim and Western-Muslim relations. However this time the outcome is not going to be determined by military might, but on the strength of moral and ideological convictions. Unfortunately, that is exactly why the West is in danger, for while Islam is weak militarily it is strong on conviction, the West is strong militarily but weak on conviction. The West will either buckle, surrender and submit, handing Islam the ascendancy, or it will brace itself and stand firm for what it believes (if in fact it can remember what that is).

By his very public Easter baptism of the high profile Egypt-born Italian journalist and Muslim convert to Catholicism, Magdi Allam, Pope Benedict has made a decisive and very courageous statement in defence of religious liberty, specifically a Muslim's right to convert.

Meanwhile back in Egypt, as the Great Apostasy Debate heats up, the Supreme Constitutional Court has been asked to rule on whether civil laws permitting religious freedom violate Article 2 of the Constitution which specifies that Islam is the religion of the State, and the principal source of l egislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia).

The baptism of Magdi Allam

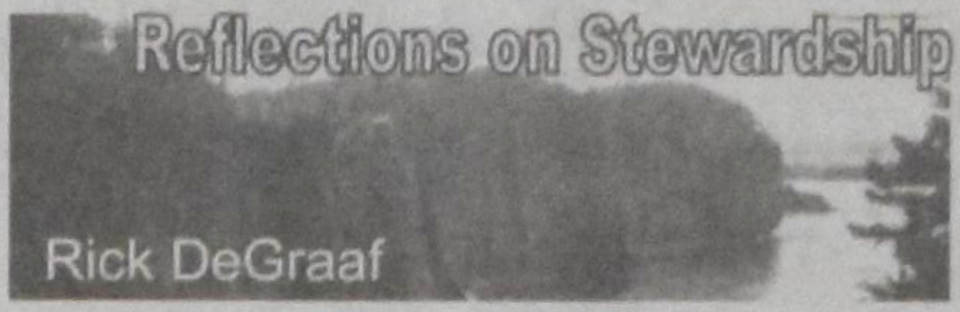
Magdi Allam is the deputy director of the Italian newspaper, Corriere della Sera. As a professing but nominal Muslim, Allam wrote many pieces that were critical of Islam and supportive of Israel. Because of this, Allam has received death threats and had fatwas issued against him, requiring him to live under police protection for the past five years.

The terrorism he has witnessed and the persecution he has suffered drove him to re-examine Islam and to reassess Christianity, especially after Pope Benedict's September 2006 address at Regensburg, which highlighted the unreasonableness of violence in religion.

Magdi Allam testifies: "Thus, I finally saw the light, by divine grace – the healthy fruit of a long, matured gestation, lived in suffering and joy, together with intimate reflection and conscious and manifest expression.... The miracle of Christ's resurrection reverberated through my soul, liberating it from the darkness...."

Magdi Allam was baptised by

See **Religious Liberty** *on page 15*



Day 4 – Hanging lamps

The fourth in the series "Seven reflections based on the days of creation":

On the fourth day God gave the order: "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years.... God made two great lights.... He also made the stars (Genesis 1:14-16).

On this creation day God specifically created these light sources and set up the day and night cycle that we are so accustomed to. By 'hanging' these lights and establishing their movements, God set in place the means by which we are able to measure time and navigate our travel by understanding of the position of the stars.

As creatures restricted by time and space God's provision of 'hanging lamps' in the sky serves to remind us of our human limitations. For instance, we need a cycle of work and rest. When we travel somewhere we have to put in the time and effort to overcome the distance. Also, our life span is fixed by a period of time. Compare us to the angels who do not have these limitations of time and distance. They move about freely and without a trace, as time or space does not seem to limit them. Do they, like us need rest? I don't know, however, the new city that God is making ready for us when Jesus returns does not have night as Revelations 21:25b says "...there will be no night there."

God created these time and space limitations and put them in place prior to creating all the world's creatures and mankind. It is the context in which we live each day, but it's not something that we ought to be concerned or complain about. Sure, sometimes it is very difficult for us to accept our limitations. And, yes it is difficult to grow older graciously. And space, well yes it is frustrating to be stuck in one place when we want to be at another – maybe because of heavy traffic or bad weather.

We are often in a rush and find ourselves banging against these limitations. Our "mad running about" trying to make up for 'lost time' is a sure indicator of how sin and death has spoiled creation, tainting it from what God created and deflecting it from the purposes for which he created it. Consider how God took pleasure at the end of each creation day and said it was good. Consider how God enjoyed walking with Adam and Eve in that first garden. There was no need to rush or precisely track time. I am sure that everyone enjoyed each other's company even more than we might today enjoy the company of a faithful companion and/or a pet.

When we look up and see the sun, moon, stars and planets and are overwhelmed by the vastness, we are looking at evidence of a creative God whose creation of the universe stretches our minds. As science finds ways to explore deeper and measure space more accurately, the distances, the size of the numbers and the vastness boggles our minds. Awesome, awesome. is all that we can say. Take some time to look up and let your mind get blown away. Revel in the vastness and our own smallness. And then, just think, that this God who created all this cares about us! He is the one that put each object in the sky in place. Who are we to even try to put limits on God by measuring what we see?

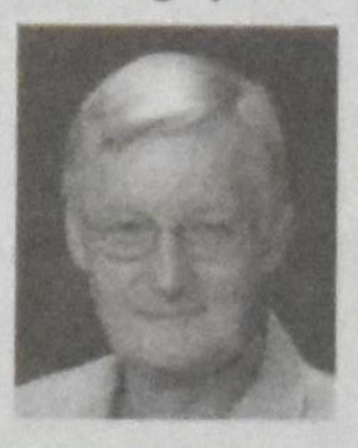
Those who study the universe with increasingly powerful telescopes have a front row seat. In terms of stewardship though, if it doesn't lead to an acknowledgment or praise to God, the study bears little value. Astronomers and others who invest their time in its study can help us appreciate the creative hand of God, but they can also waste it in an elusive and speculative search for the beginning of time – the big bang. Study – but give credit where credit is due!

The sun, moon and stars – daily reminders of an awesome God! As stewards of the time God gives us let us invest in worship and getting to know him. I believe it's what God wants too!

Stewardly tip: Look up. This summer when vacationing with your children or grandchildren, on a dark night find a secure and flat spot (away from light pollution) and spread out some blankets/mats. Lay down on them on your back with your heads close together in the middle and your legs spread out. Turn off all flashlights and lights. Look up and ask your child/grandchild to be still for just a little while as you look up and take in what you see. After some time invite them to react – what do you see? – How does it make you feel – What comes to mind? Let them be awed by the vastness and the wonder of what God has done.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Day 5 – Creatures



Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

How can you benefit charity AND your family?

CSS offers advice on many ways to **benefit charity and still benefit your family.** Confidential visits made across Canada.

Connecting Donors, Charities & Ministries

Christian Stewardship Services

1-800-267-8890 | admin@csservices.ca
www.csservices.ca

Church

Famous atheists infiltrate events for 'Intelligent Design' film

Kevin Mooney and Josiah Ryan

(CNSNews.com) – Outspoken opponents of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, including scientists Richard Dawkins and Paul Zachary "P.Z." Myers, managed to infiltrate private screenings for a movie on the subject to be released on April 18, according to a film producer who helped to organize the events.

Dawkins, an Oxford University professor, biologist and author of *The God Delusion*, attempted to gain entry to a private screening of the film *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, on March 20 in Bloomington, Minnesota, as did Myers, a biology professor at the University of Minnesota.

Dawkins was successful; Myers was not. However, Myers managed to intrude upon a telephone press conference call the next day that included Ben Stein, the film's narrator and one of the film's producers.

Expelled calls attention to the plight of highly credentialed scholars who have been forced out of prestigious academic positions because they proposed Intelligent Design as a possible alternative to Charles Darwin's 150-year-old theories about the origins of life .

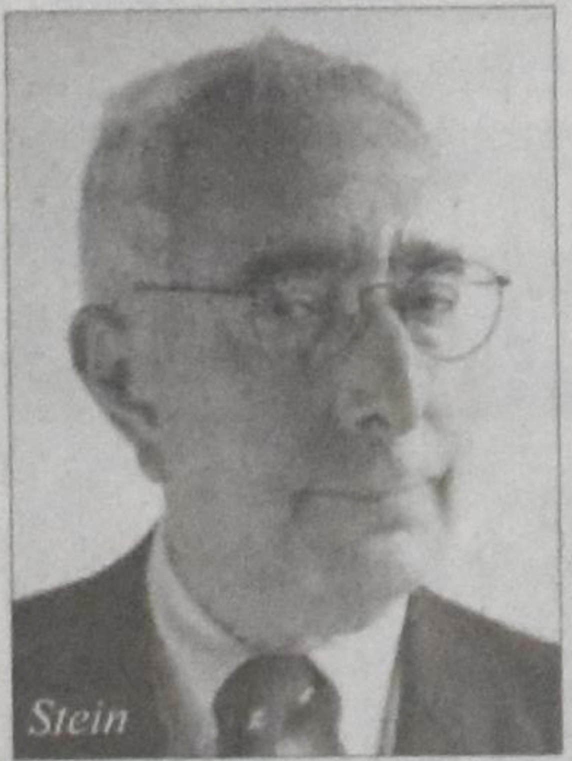
Instead of entertaining a debate on the merits of competing theories, the scientific establishment has moved to suppress the ID movement in a "systematic and ruthless" way at odds with the U.S.'s founding principles, the film asserts.

Computer glitch brings hostile crowd

The private screenings are designed to help build grassroots support for the film and to call attention to the mistreatment of scientists who are working to open new doors of inquiry that could help to advance human knowledge, Mark Mathis, an associate producer for the film, said in an interview.

A computer glitch, however, made it possible for certain individuals to R.S.V.P. to some screenings when they, in fact, had not been invited, Mathis said. The same glitch also occurred on March 19 in Boston where at least 30 percent of the audience members were antagonistic toward the film's message, he said.

Although the filmmakers noticed that Dawkins had arrived at the Minneapolis screening uninvited, they decided to let him in anyway after he signed in as "Clinton Dawkins," Mathis said. Meanwhile, about half an hour into a telephone press conference the next day – designed to allow reporters to question Stein and the film's producers – a caller identified himself as P.Z. Myers after he had been patched into the call and demanded the producers cease and desist from "twisting the truth." Myers asked, "You do know that both P.Z. Myers and Richard Dawkins have posted substantial criticism of your movie don't you?" prompting laughter and astonishment from Stein, the producers, and the reporters on the conference call. Stein said to Myers, "You are a very persistent person."


Stein

Although Myers and dozens of blogs have seized on the idea that the *Expelled* filmmakers, who complain about scientists being expelled from academia are now doing the same thing, Mathis said that the real irony is being missed.

"Myers is free to see the film once it is officially released," said Mathis. "But those individuals who have devoted their lives to scientific study might not ever regain their posts after exploring new avenues of inquiry simply because they do not concur with the Darwinian view."

Stein – a former White House speechwriter who now works as a Hollywood actor – interviewed academics and scientists on both sides of the debate throughout the film, including Dawkins. Dawkins and Myers are outspoken proponents of evolutionary theory who have been critical of *Expelled*. They contend the film is edited and crafted in a duplicitous and misleading manner that misrepresents their views. Mathis denied that, and asserted that the interviews were not set up under false pretenses.

In the film, Dawkins revealed that his belief in evolution helped to push him toward a belief in atheism. "I'm bad news for the science lobby," Dawkins said in an interview with Stein.

If called to testify in a court case, he could not deny the connection between Darwinism and atheism, Dawkins said in the film.

Evangelical friendship statement to Jews refers to their need for Christ

ADL calls it 'offensive, insulting'

Marian Van Til

NEW YORK – Late last month the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) issued "The Gospel and the Jewish People – An Evangelical Statement." The document pledges a commitment to be "loving friends" to the Jewish people and to stand against injustice aimed at them. It acknowledges that "church history has been marred with anti-Semitic words and deeds."

The document was signed by 44 evangelical leaders from around the world, including Charles Colson (director of Prison Fellowship), Lon Allison (director of the Billy Graham Center) and Hugh Palmer (rector of All Souls Church in London, UK).

The World Evangelical Alliance is a global ministry that works with a network of churches and organizations in 128 countries to "join in common concern to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus in their communities." It wants to give "a worldwide identity, voice and platform" to more than 420 million evangelical Christians and seeks "holiness, justice and renewal at every level of society – individual, family, community and culture, for God's glory and the transforming of nations.

'Transparency' not appreciated

The statement appeared in an ad in the *New York Times*, where it began creating controversy that is ongoing. The controversy stems from the WEA's refusal to soft-pedal the biblical fact that all human beings, including Jews, need to be saved by the world's only Savior, Jesus Christ. "We want to be transparent in affirming that we believe the most loving and Scriptural expression of our friendship toward Jewish people, and to anyone we call friend, is to forthrightly share the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ."

In that regard the statement has three points:

- *We believe that it is only through Jesus that all people can receive eternal life. If Jesus is not the Messiah of the Jewish people, He cannot be the Savior of the World (Acts 4:12).*
- *We recognize that it is good and right for those with specialized knowledge, history and skills to use these gifts to introduce individuals to the Messiah, and that includes those ministries specifically directed to the Jewish people (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).*

Charles Colson

- *We deplore the use of deception or coercion in evangelism; however, we reject the notion that it is deceptive for followers of Jesus Christ who were born Jewish to continue to identify as Jews (Romans 11:1).*

The WEA was hoping that their wish not to offend Jews in making these statements was clear, "but we are compelled by our faith and commitment to the Scriptures to stand by these principles. It is out of our profound respect for Jewish people that we seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, and encourage others to do the same, for we believe that salvation is only found in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the World."

Unfortunately, some Jewish respondents didn't see the statement as emanating from respect or love. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) issued its own press release about the statement, insisting it is "offensive and insulting to the Jewish people and brazenly dismisses Jewish self-definition." Abraham Foxman, the ADL's director, said, "Instead of validating God's irrevocable covenant with the Jewish people, and ongoing Jewish covenantal life, themes also found in their Scripture, this group of religious leaders does the opposite."

Jews such as Jews for Jesus, who convert to evangelical Christianity and then maintain aspects of their religious and cultural Jewishness, are particularly villified by the ADL. Foxman believes that that is "deceptive" and impossible. Foxman interpreted the evangelical statement as "targeting Jews for conversion."

Persecution continues to rise in India

HIMACHAL PRADESH, India (OneNewsNow) – Christian mission groups are trying to get details about the fate of a group of believers who were kidnapped in India.

About 40 Christians were kidnapped together by extremists who took them to a Hindu temple. There, the kidnappers tried to force the Christians to renounce Christ and return to Hinduism. According to Gospel for Asia, the crime took place in Himachal Pradesh, a northwestern Indian state, where persecution against Christians has been common. (Gospel for Asia trains and supports thousands of indigenous missionaries who have formed hundreds of churches as part of its mission to bring the Gospel to all the countries in Asia.)

Daniel Yohannan, vice president of GFA, says these particular extremists are just one of many anti-Christian groups throughout India. "All of them have the same agenda..., they don't want Christianity, they don't want Christians spreading the gospel," says Yohannan.

Yohannan notes that some of the persecutors have become believers in the process. "It's kind of cool how that happens," he said.

Yohannan says it is possible the kidnappers of the group are affiliated with an anti-Christian political party that controls the area. And he explains that Christians are often ostracized from society throughout India.

Reformed Alliance wonders 'How does Calvin sound?'

GENEVA (WARC) – The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches have been looking for a hymn and a sermon for the festivities that will mark the 500th anniversary of Reformer John Calvin. They now hope they have both a fine hymn and an excellent sermon; April 1 was the deadline for entries.

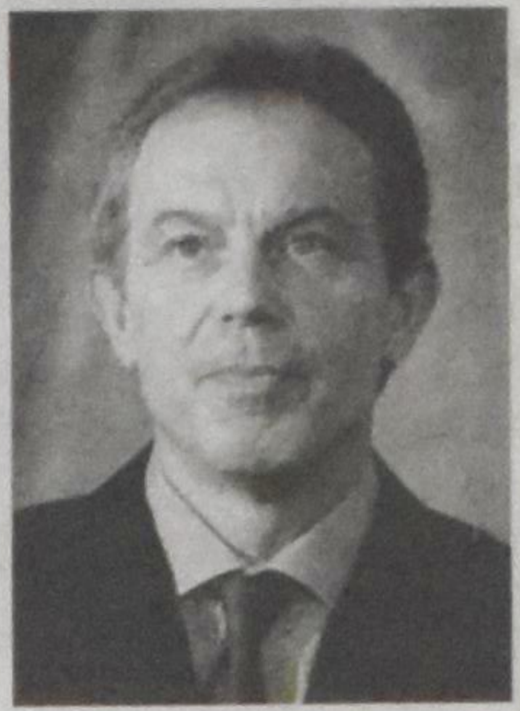
How does Calvin sound? The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches raised this question twice in the last year. With a hymn competition and a sermon competition, interested parties from all the world were invited to send contributions for the festivities surrounding the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2009. Calvin lived from 1509 to 1564.

The hymn competition was looking for a song that will be the official hymn of the "Calvin 09" festivities. The hymn has to be able to be learned quickly in various countries and sung in worship. At the same time it has to stand in the Reformed tradition of hymns, based on a biblical text.

New and surprising perspectives on the importance of Calvin for today are being looked for – supplied from within a sermon. The most convincing contributions will be included in the preparations for the official Eurovision televised worship planned for Pentecost 2009 in the Cathedral St Pierre in Geneva. The theme for the sermon is "The Freedom of God and Human Freedom."

The preacher and hymnwriter whose work is chosen will each win a trip to Geneva or to another city in Europe lasting several days. Winners will be announced later this year.

Tony Blair explains his new faith mission



LONDON (ENI) – Former British prime minister Tony Blair has told an audience of 1600 people at Westminster Cathedral that his new Tony Blair Faith Foundation will aim to bring together people of all major religions. "For religion to be a force for good, it must be rescued not simply from extremism – faith as a means of exclusion – but also from irrelevance, an interesting part of our history but not of our future," he said.

Blair's foundation, which will formally launch in May, will try to implement the UN's goals for improving conditions in the developing world by 2015.

The former prime minister also warned that too many people see religious faith as stark dogmatism and empty ritual. "Faith is reduced to a system of strange convictions and actions that, to some, can appear far removed from the necessities and anxieties of ordinary life," he said.

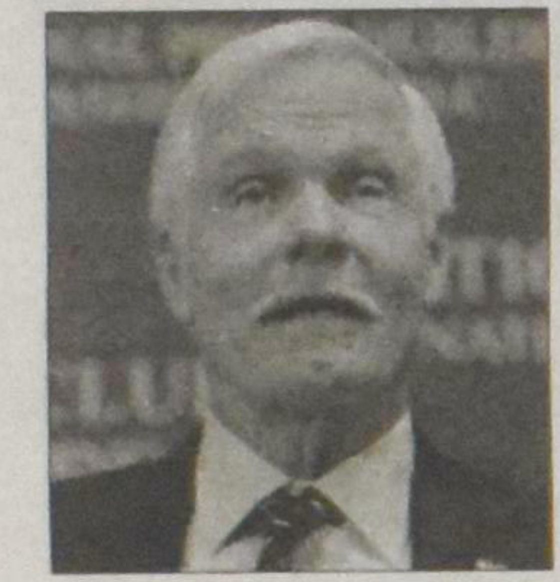
"It is this face that gives militant secularism an easy target. It mocks certain of the practices and traditions of organized religion which they define as 'faith.' 'Faith' is to be found in the cassocks and the gowns and the rituals." Blair himself has spent most of his life as an Anglican but joined his wife in the Roman Catholic Church after he left his position as prime minister of the UK.

One of the aims of Blair's foundation's is to bring people of faith together to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals, which include the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The speech was his first and most detailed public statement on religion, a subject his most senior advisers told him to avoid during his decade as prime minister. Alastair Campbell, his director of strategy and communications, once famously intervened to prevent the prime minister from answering a question about his faith, saying: "We don't do God."

Blair said that there are several reasons why politicians sidestep questions on faith, supporting Campbell's policy. "You may be considered weird. Normal people aren't supposed to 'do God,'" he said. "There is an assumption that, before you take a decision you engage in some slightly cultish interaction with your religion. Third, you want to impose your religion on others. Fourth, you are pretending to be better than the next person. And finally, and worst of all, that you are somehow messianically trying to co-opt God to bestow a divine legitimacy on your politics."

Next year Blair will be a visiting professor at Yale University in the U.S. He'll lecture on faith and globalization.

CNN founder who once derided Christianity joins churches to fight malaria



OXFORD, Ohio (ENI) – Ted Turner, who once called Christianity "a religion for losers" has launched a joint initiative with Lutherans and Methodists in the United States to raise US$200 million to fight malaria in Africa.

Best known globally for creating the Cable News Network, the 69-year-old Turner launched the anti-malaria project through his United Nations Foundation on April 1. Other partners in the campaign are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the United Methodist Church.

Turner said he had become more tolerant of Christianity and religion in general, and regretted anything he may have said concerning it in the past that was negative. "Religion is one of the bright spots as far as I'm concerned, even though there are some areas, like everything else, where they've gone over the top a little in my opinion," Turner told the Associated Press. "But I'm sure God, wherever he is, wants to see us get along with one another and love one another."

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has also provided a $10 million grant that will help promote the campaign in churches. Gates owns Microsoft.

An entirely new level

The Rev. John Nunes, president and chief executive of Lutheran World Relief, told journalists, "This will be the largest campaign of its type ever for Lutherans." The Methodist Church The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, with their humanitarian arm Lutheran World Relief, will raise between $75 million and $100 million. There are 8 million Lutherans in those two denominations in the U.S., and 70 million worldwide. The Methodist Church, with 12 million members worldwide, believes it too will raise abut $100 million.

Turner told his UN audience the initiative "will take our malaria prevention efforts to an entirely new level". Each year, malaria kills more than one million people, who are mostly women and children under the age of five in Africa.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons fastest-growing 'churches' in North America

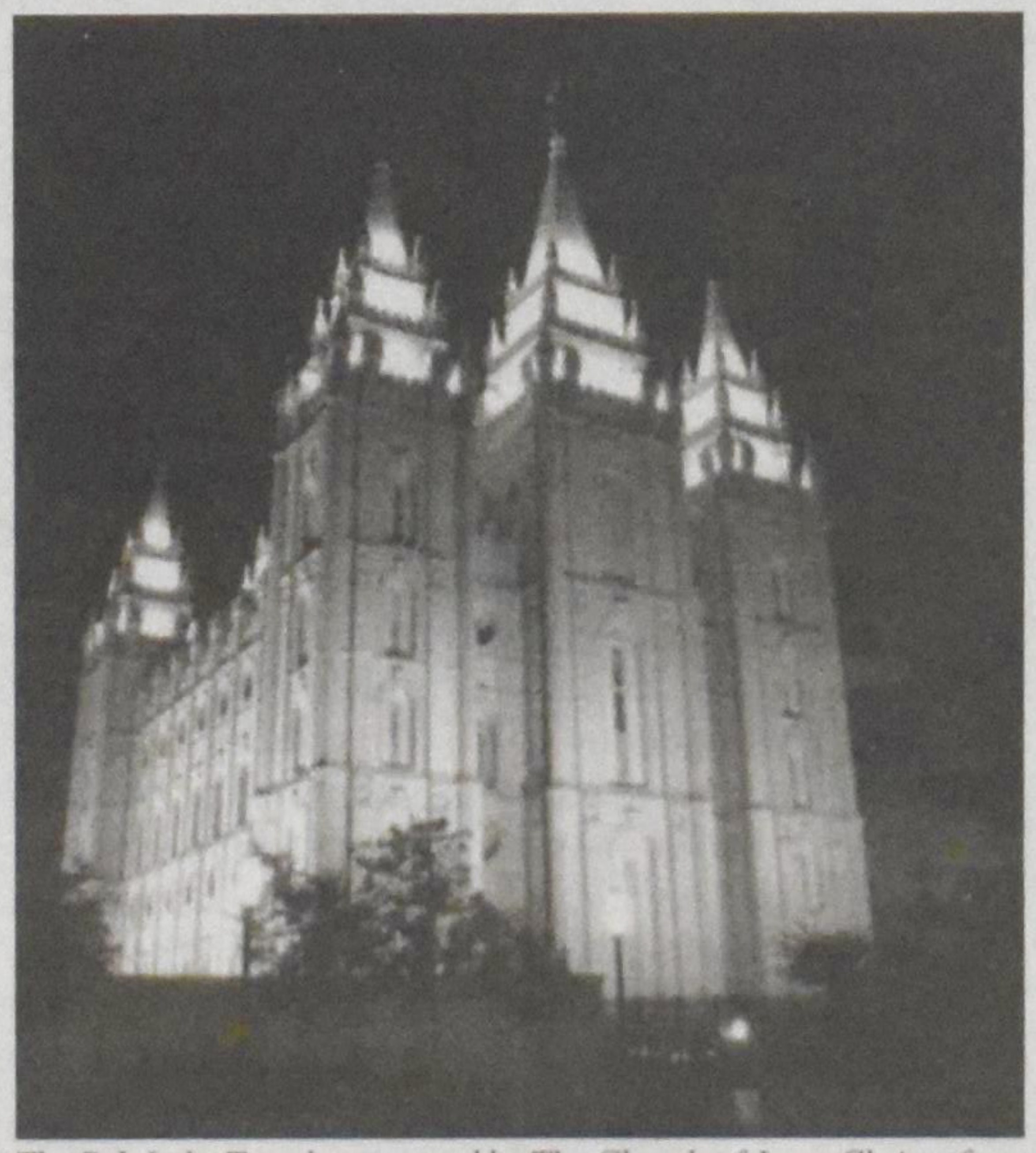
Lillian Kwon

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Christian Post) – The two fastest-growing church bodies in the United States and Canada are ones whose beliefs conflict with traditional Christian teaching and who are regarded as cults by many orthodox Christians, says a newly published report. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reported the largest membership increases in a year, according to the National Council of Churches *2008 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches.*

Although Jehovah's Witnesses currently rank 25th in size with over 1.06 million members, they reported a 2.25 percent increase in membership since the publication of the 2007 yearbook. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – commonly known as the Mormon church – grew 1.56 percent; it is listed by the NCC as the fourth largest "church."

Neither Jehovah's Witnesses nor Mormons are accepted in orthodox Christian circles as part of the larger Body of Christ because of their unorthodox beliefs. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the Trinity, the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Latter-day Saints believe "divine" scripture apart from the Bible, including the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price.

Still, there has been some softening among orthodox Christians towards members of these groups, if not toward acceptance of their fundamental heresies. Mormonism was formerly listed under "cults and sects" by the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.) but has more recently been categorized among "newly developed religions" on the North American Mission Board apologetics page.



The Salt Lake Temple, operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the best-known Mormon temple. Located in Salt Lake City, Utah, it is the centerpiece of the 10 acre Temple Square.

Regarding growth in other church bodies: the survey showed that the Roman Catholic Church heads the list of historic Christian churches that grew last year (0.87 per cent). The greatest losses occurred in the Anglican Communion (Anglican Church in Canada and the Episcopal Church in the U.S.) and among mainline Presbyterians and Lutherans. Only three of the 10 largest churches in North America are mainline Protestant churches; three of the top 25 are Pentecostal churches; and six of the top 15 are historically black churches.

Nature

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

Cats – Good pets; pampered predators

As I prepare to write this column, I have a pet cat, named Cat, sitting next to me on my recliner. I say this to establish my credentials: I, too, after many years of strong indifference to cats (OK, it was practically hatred); I have been converted: enjoy pet cats.

My credentials need to be established because some of what follows may be critical of cats. Criticising cats is perilous. I remember reading this expression long ago: "It was as if I had said that my favourite drink was hot, fresh human blood, with a dash of tabasco."

So, with some hesitation, I say this: If you care at all for wildlife, your cat should not be allowed to run free. Cats belong in houses, in kennels (more about this later), or on farms – the last with some controls, be those controls implemented by neutering, firearm, or coyote.

There: I've said it. Cats don't rule the world. They shouldn't rule your life. They are environmental catastrophes for wild creatures, although necessary for mouse and rat control in certain situations.

Cats are trophy hunters. No amount of feeding will stop their urge to hunt. They do not hunt with cameras. They kill small mammals, birds, amphibians, and (rarely) fish. They are not, however, threats to large mammals like cows, horses, deer, great white sharks, moose, or bears.

When I saw the statistics of birds killed by domestic and feral cats (feral = "cats living in the wild"), I was dumbfounded. Still, I thought, statistics are sometimes a little inflated, so I took the conservative numbers. Here are the "Estimates of the number of songbirds killed each year by feral cats in Wisconsin alone range from 8 million to 217 million, though the number is actually believed to be around 39 million," according to Steven Oestreicher, chairman of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

"The estimated numbers of pet cats in urban and rural regions of the United States have grown from 30 million in 1970 to nearly 65 million in 2000. . . . Nationwide [in the U.S.A.], approximately 30% of households have cats. In rural areas, approximately 60% of households have cats," according to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

When the Wisconsin Conservation Commission proposed classifying feral cats as an "unprotected species," there was quite a response. Although a majority of the counties surveyed via public meeting supported the proposal, many people were aghast that under the proposal, domestic cats without a collar could be considered wild and unprotected. Aghast might be too mild a word: "Those cats are no different than someone else's children," commented some people, quite loudly. The Commission responded, "We are not advocating a hunting season. . . . This is really to get the attention of the pet owner . . . ."

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology gives a reasoned response to the statistics, in my opinion: "Even if conservative estimates of prey taken are considered, the number of prey animals killed is immense. Feeding cats does not deter them from killing wildlife as they do not always eat what they kill. Humans introduced cats to North America and they must be responsible for the control and removal of cats that prey on wildlife."

According to one biologist, "Most legitimate conservation organizations want elimination of feral cat populations, most human and animal welfare organizations want 'managed' cat populations and trap-neuter-release programs. As far as I'm concerned, they're non-native species once they're feral and no different than zebra mussels, house sparrows, or feral hogs, none of which are protected."

But what about your suburban cat that you let out every night? Definitely not a feral animal, but still a deadly predator and a catastrophe for wild bird populations. There is an alternative to keeping the cat inside all the time (the way many apartment cats are kept). It's simple. And it may prevent the trauma of seeing your cat killed by vehicles. If you have a yard, make a cat kennel.

A kennel. If it's OK for dogs, why not for cats? My friend, Connie Mann, loves cats, but doesn't like to see her pets become part of the pavement of Highway 16 which runs right outside her house. So Connie and Jeff Mann made a kennel for their cats. A "yard" might be more like it; or a "play room."

For more information about cat-kennels, contact the Cats in Kennel Program http://www3.samgreen@sympatico.ca or you can view expensive pre-made cat kennels at http://www.thecatsden.net/enclosure.html.

But think about a cat kennel. You can save wild birds, and save your cat so that he/she/it can sit by your side as write you an article. You can even look out the window to watch birds at the feeder together.

Curt Gesch spents his retirement judging 4-H speeches, serving on the board of Calvin Theological Seminary, serving as a advocate for the Disabilities Concerns for the CRC, and looking out windows.

Oh, the beloved cat.

Yes, we put a harness on him and put him on a leash outside. It worked out rather well. He was conditioned. The minute we put the harness oh him he would become very docile – like he knew he was beaten. Even if the leash was off, he would stay close by because he assumed he was tied up. It was wonderful. Oddly enough, he could still catch birds even while he was tied to a tree and did not have claws on his front feet. Quick as a cat is very true.

Jerilyn Gesch

I wouldn't worry about establishing good relations with a cat. Their number one strategy is to always keep you off balance. Drama queens – every one of them, even the males. Our cats make a big production out of it every time they come in from outside, as if they've been traveling the world for weeks and deserve a huge welcome back. If you don't give it, they try to trip you just as you're about to go down the stairs. Vindictive vixens.

Harry der Nederlanden

Scientists read Antarctic mud for climate change insight

Douglas Fox

McMurdo Station, Antarctica – With summers both intense and ephemeral, life here is a race against the revolving seasons. Summer daylight never ceases at this US research base on Ross Island, just off the coast of Antarctica. The sun runs endless laps around the sky, and for those who live here, work never stops.

This blending of day and night centers on the 24-hour stratigraphy lab. Inside the nondescript metal building perched on stilts, geologists from around the world indulge, of all things, their collective love of petrified mud. Two shifts of scientists work around the clock examining a 4-inch-wide column of stone – a new section of which is delivered daily from a drill that, by the end of the season, will have penetrated three-quarters of a mile into the ocean bed.

This stone began as mud that settled on the ocean floor and curdled over eons into rock. From it, the scientists are reading geologic tea leaves between 14 million and 19 million years old: fossils and chemical signatures that provide a record of past climates – and show how Antarctica's ice sheets responded to climate swings.

In doing so, they hope to predict how well Antarctica's ice will withstand rising temperatures in the century to come.

The two crews of scientists converge at 8:30 each morning: One has worked all night beneath the hum of fluorescent lights, and the other has just risen to pick up where the night shift left off.

Their one-hour meeting consists of a slide show of discoveries made overnight – worms petrified in million-year death throes, fossilized sea-shells, microscopic diatoms, and bits of gravel – all suspended in the core.

The slide show is lively, punctuated by questions and murmurs of surprise. "Here is something very weird," announces one presenter, "a bryozoan having some sort of affair with a foram." He points out two tiny fossils caught for eternity in a compromising interspecies pose. A nerdy joke – but the audience likes it.

After seeing slides, the crowd pours down the hallway for another daily ritual – the "land grab." They browse over tables where sections of last night's core lay end to end. Anywhere the gawkers find something they want to study in detail, they jam a toothpick with a paper flag into the cardboard case that cradles the core. The flags carry labels to identify the owners. "Pmag-ers do it better," say some of the flags – a cryptic boast to the consummate hipness of paleomagnetists who study the magnetic signatures of ancient rocks. Other flags sport the face of a lion; worms and snails were the lions of the mud, explains their owner, who searches the core for fossils of the predatory vermin.

Technicians will saw apart the core and deliver pieces to those who staked a claim.

The process repeats daily for eight weeks during the Antarctic summer. Each day offers surprises – and monotony. Science, like the seafloor, is sedimentary. Those fossils and diatoms aren't breakthroughs in themselves, but patient study of them gradually reveals a picture of the past.

A similar core drilled last year has already revealed surprises: the Ross Ice Shelf, a Spain-sized slab of ice that hangs off Antarctica's coast, has responded strongly to past climate shifts.

"We saw something like 50 cycles [in a few million years] of the Ross Ice Shelf disappearing and coming back," says Fabio

See **Antarctic mud** *p. 17*

Meditation

You have ascended on high

When you ascended on high,
you led captives in your train;
you received gifts from men,
even from the rebellious -
that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.
Psalm 68:18

Abraham Kuyper

Doubt is nowhere more pernicious than when it undermines the Lord's bodily ascension into heaven. As soon as the precious comfort of our Lord's Ascension is removed from the soul's viewpoint, and the ascension is doubted, skepticism, like a worm, also eats its way through all the other truths of our faith. For God's children this should be a wake-up call to work at focusing our faith on the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should make the full reality of the glorious ascension of our Lord our very own, and not be content to pay only lip-service to it, but completely engross themselves into the comfort that is poured out liberally from heaven exactly because Jesus ascended there. To be sure, the ascension of Jesus presents an almost insurmountable irritation to our earthly common sense. With a show of unbelieving wisdom we ask how it is possible, that Jesus should be lifted up bodily, not just a few feet, but up and beyond the highest clouds? How is it possible that Jesus actually reached the stratosphere with his body? There is no air to breathe and no warmth to keep him from freezing. He must have died there from exposure. And more keen intellects will ask how Jesus could go beyond the stars when even a ray of light takes thousands of years to reach us? So how could he arrive in heaven so soon when in less then ten days, he sent his Spirit on Pentecost? And thus our scepticism grows. What, after all, do the heavens really mean for our rational minds? How can an earthly body exist in heaven? How could an earthly body traverse all the heavens, and how might there be found in the highest heaven a right hand of God so that Jesus could take his place there? To be sure, none of that is possible according to our human understanding. It is all the height of folly; and those who insist on these doubts, will find that, indeed, for them Jesus could not have gone to heaven. But they will also have to realize that if they rely only on human insight nothing at all remains after their death. Their bodies will be deposited into a hole in the ground and there simply decompose to dust.

However, if we have faith and we confess, and rejoice like a child of God, we also know that we are not constrained by our earthly understanding, but that God has broken down that wall. A glorious light now shines through that broken wall and by that light we can see all these matters on earth differently. We will be able to see things in the heavens above that are unknown to us now. We will get to see that our strength does not contain the sum of all power, but rather our strength is only an insignificant small part of it. High above our strength and all the power of nature the glorious power of God shines. The tremendous majesty of God breaks into this earthly life with a sovereign absolute determination to make use of our flesh, of the air, the mountains and the clouds, the stars and firmament, heat and cold, and all distances in space, indeed, all that is created. Not only that, it also compels all things to obey his divine ordinances. So, when the Son of God came to earth and had taken on our flesh, the Lord God willed that, though his son did not remain on earth, he would not put off that flesh, but arrive in heaven with the very flesh he assumed here. Now from heaven he can still comfort and care for God's church on earth – as there can be no space, distance, firmament or starry sky, nor any law of gravity that can in any way resist his almighty will. He works his plan for all his creatures exactly as he has determined. That's why a child of God must not calculate the distance or speed necessary for Christ's ascension. When it is God's pleasure to use one of his creatures in an extraordinary way, for an extraordinary purpose, how can we impose limits on such events? All our "facts" become relative; our telescopes and scales and measuring tapes become useless in our hands; the only way we can grasp what has happened is through faith penetrating our being. When you kneel in prayer, it takes less than a heartbeat for the vision of faith to arrive at the destination of heaven where Jesus is. You will see him as the Lamb that was slain, and adore him with an all encompassing love.

"The Ascension" by Scala

Then we no longer take offence and our sinful thinking has no arguments left. It has been silenced by faith, and faith itself has begun to speak. That faith has made Jesus' ascension such a certainty that you can truly see him in all his majesty and can also point him out to others. Now you will also see how for more than eighteen hundred years, day in and day out he has been encouraging, comforting and blessing his own from heaven. This is the miracle. Even when others see nothing at all poured out from heaven, the eye of faith observes the manna for the soul raining down from on high, scattered abroad by Jesus for his whole church. Just as Jesus once saw Satan fall from heaven like a bolt of lightning, while others saw nothing, so also those who have been quickened by the Spirit see a constant rain of grace falling down from the clouds of heaven upon parched souls. The person of faith no longer needs to ask whether Jesus has ascended into heaven. Every morning and every night he experiences that Jesus is in heaven and receives a blessing from the Lord. Of course there are moments when he does not see it, but those are the evil times when the cataract of sin covers the eye of faith. But just as soon as that cataract is removed, Jesus returns in his vision; Jesus' angels once more surround him, and his salvation comes down like rain. Do I need proof that the sun shines on the earth each day, when I stand in its light and feel its warmth? So what more proof do I need for Jesus' ascension, when I experience the warmth of his love in my heart, and discern that it comes from him?

Our view of Jesus' ascension has been clouded by the distance of our souls from him, who is our Immanuel. It has happened because we were in the wrong, and lived as if Immanuel did not exist, or we tried to call on God in our own power. But if you know that you are grafted into the body, as a living member, through the mysterious amazing bond with his Spirit, then all distance falls away. All your prayers reach him instantly and his blessings descend as gifts for your soul. Then a ladder like Jacobs is erected (see Gen 28:10) and on that ladder our soul speeds up to meet him even as messengers of love come to meet us from above. Everything becomes energized, glowing with heavenly light, and charged with divine life. The penetrating eye of faith sees earth and heaven as one because of Jesus' ascension.

Certainly there will be times when the light of your eye of faith fades; when sin and shame, guilt and unrighteousness and all manner of evil idolatry, and all kinds of imagination, arrogance and pride will hinder your prayers. Yet even in the deepest night of your gloom you can still listen to the prayer of Jesus above as he pleads on your behalf at the throne of grace, pleading first of all, that the very power to pray again will be returned to you. Should that prayer for you ever stop even for a moment, there would be no salvation for you at all. The intercession of your heavenly High Priest is the foundation on which your hope is built. When you go down to sleep you surrender yourself to that prayer of your Lord; and when you get up in the morning that same prayer of Jesus gives you the confidence to tackle the day's trials and struggles courageously. That's why you can't live without Jesus' ascension. It is woven right into the fabric of your life and leads to the certain expectation of your soul, that one day you will be with him who waits for you.

Note: *This is part 2 of a series of meditations by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack van Meggelen.*

Corinthians

A definitive sense of reality

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. I Corinthians 15:17, 18

A. A. van Ruler

Here Paul adds a new argument to his dispute with those in the church of Corinth who denied the resurrection of the dead. He has already marshaled a number of arguments against them. His main objection is that it would mean that Christ has not been raised from the dead. But from this flow many other consequences.

It also means that preaching has lost its core and that the Christian faith is without content. Above all it would mean that the whole of the apostolic witness is exposed as one huge historical deception. The faith awakened in their hearts would then produce nothing, for they would still be imprisoned in the guilt of their sins.

This would also be true for those who have already died, says Paul. They died in Christ, which is to say, that they willingly accepted this death as they willingly accepted life. They did so in the awareness that human existence and the being of the whole of reality is not to be given up as lost.

This is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Humanity and the world can exist before the face of God because of the reconciling death of Christ; they are no longer locked up in the guilt of sin because of his saving resurrection.

This is the deep sense of reality that the gospel gives us. No deeper, truer reality is conceivable than this certainty that we can affirm ourselves and the world as a reality pleasing to God. Only when, with an eye on God, we can so stand before God's face knowing that he takes pleasure in us and the fact that we exist then are we fully here. In this way, created being acquires something eternal. It is freed to eternal life.

In this awareness, in this fellowship with God, we can without hesitation or reservation accept ourselves and the fact that we are. Even more remarkably, we can then also accept death in the same way. Those who truly dare to live – those who dare to live with that divine accent on their existence – also dare to die. When they die, they go to sleep, to rest. They go to sleep "in Christ" for by his redemptive work he has made man and the world pleasing to God.

We must remember that death and dying are not the biggest problem. Living or being is a much bigger problem. It is here we must first come to clarity. We must first fully realize to the bottom of our hearts that we are and that this is real and that we are here but once and that therefore this is an irreversible reality. We must begin to affirm it, that is, we must be ready to say Amen to it and to be thankful for it and rejoice in it.

This is only possible if we also recognize and resolve the even deeper problem that is concealed behind this one – not just that we die, nor just that we live, but that in this irreversible life we sin and are therefore guilty. Those who discover that they are sinners and guilty before God are overcome with horror. But the gospel is this – that there is a solution for this bottomless problem of guilt in the grace of God in Christ and the work he has brought to completion.

Everything follows from this. Those who are truly freed from guilt dare to live life to the full to all eternity before God's face. And those who actually dare to so live also dare to so die. When by God's unfathomable good pleasure it comes to the point where they are taken away, they go to sleep in Christ. They know that God was pleased with them and that they exist for all eternity. Even when they die, they can do one more thing – affirm themselves and being and so praise God.

This is the clinching argument. We must not only live a life of salvation and divine comfort, but we must also die the same way. Only then does it become clear that what is between God and ourselves is serious. In this trust provided by faith we no longer stand still for anything, not even for the deep darkness of death. We unhesitatingly enter in. Not heroically, as if into battle. But childlike, as if going to sleep.

The fact that we truly dare to live only becomes definitively visible in that we dare to die. In death we don't fall into the bottomless abyss of perdition, lostness, nothingness. In the way we die we show that we have a true and complete sense of reality. This is the content of our faith in Christ, namely, that there is not nothing but that there is something before God's face, and that we are not nothing but also something before God's face.

This is why Paul's arguments are so convincing, at least for the church. He makes a powerful appeal to the sense of reality given us in faith. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then those who have gone to sleep in Christ are lost. They have fallen into nothingness. They no longer exist. They were never anything at all. What they used to show their acceptance of death as the clinching argument, namely, affirming themselves before the face of God, would then be a silly illusion. Their entire sense of reality would amount to empty self-delusion. And reality itself and being as such would be revealed to be nothing more than appearance.

Paul has only to list these things to call forth the certainty of the church of Christ that these are absurdities. Through Christ their awareness of being – that it is real and that it amounts to something – is far too great.

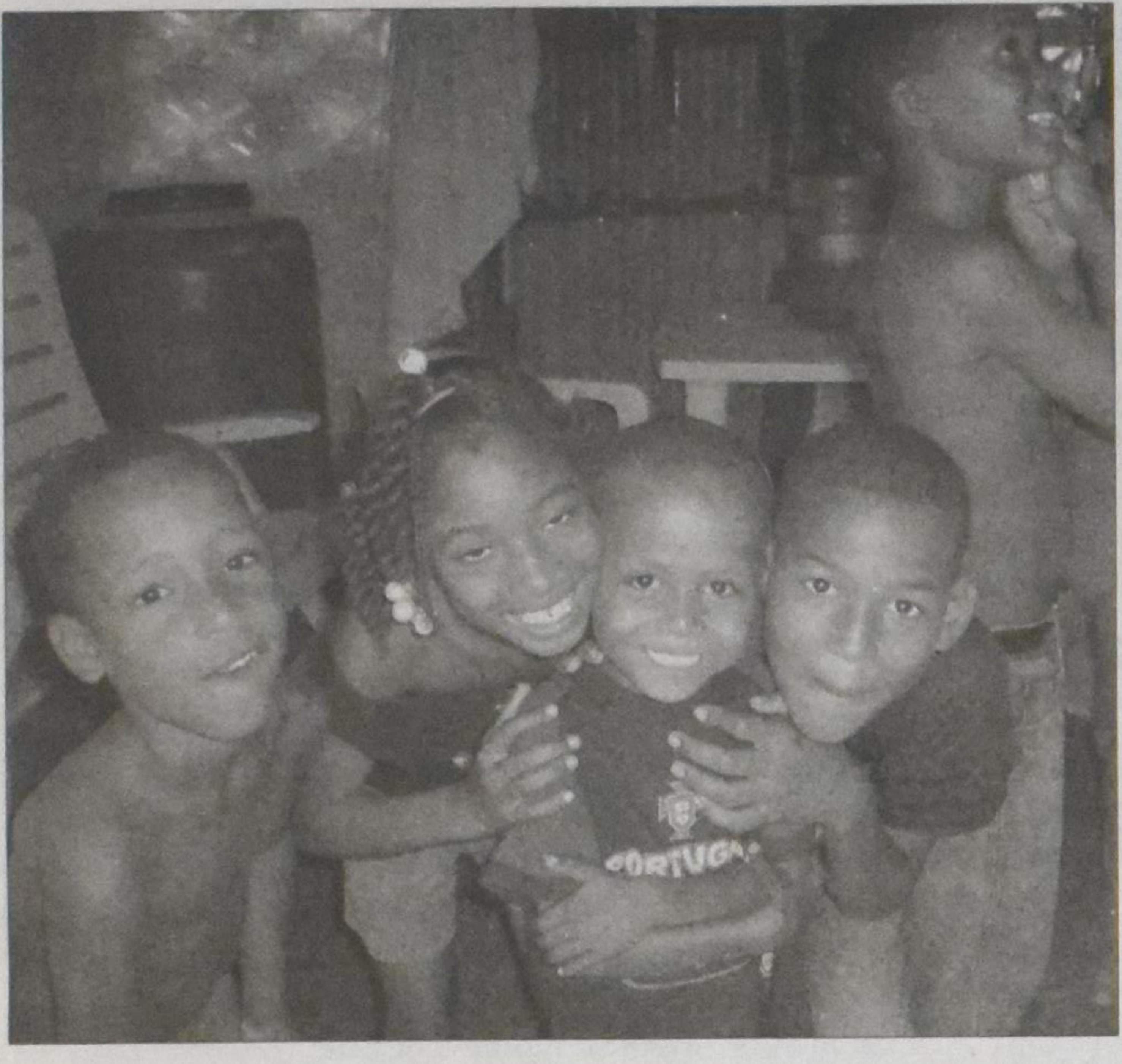
These arguments of Paul are, of course, not strictly proofs. They are circular. But what else could they be? When we reach the last point and the true one, all that remains is to complete the circle. Being is here, after all. It cannot be proven to be. Nor can we give it. All that we can do is to see it and affirm it, to say Amen to it. Or we can refuse to affirm it and reject it. This is the choice between faith and unbelief.

For those who stand in the choice of faith, however, those who have been placed there, may be so absolutely and overwhelmingly certain of being and its redemption that the nothingness and lostness of all strikes them as ridiculous.

This is why Paul draws out all those consequences from the denial of the resurrection. They are exposed as more and more absurd. He has but to make the Corinthians feel how absurd and desperately ridiculous they are. Then the ground of faith, the redemption of being, the meaning of Christ's resurrection – all of it automatically emerges as the true, sustaining, acceptable ground. It breaks through all the ridiculousness of unbelief.

Milestones

A life-changing week in the Dominican Republic



Lisa M. Petsche

Recently my 16-year-old daughter travelled to the Dominican Republic as part of a school service project. Our whole family was involved in the fundraising. Here is an account of Sarah's life-changing experience, in her own words.

Imagine, for a moment, life without all the comforts you're used to: no cell phone, television, electricity or running water. Your house is the size of an average family room. There are no fast food restaurants or movie theatres or malls.

Hard to imagine? Not for a group from my high school, who recently witnessed this.

Seven months earlier, I was chosen, along with 11 other students, to participate in a one-week mission trip to the Dominican Republic to build houses in a poor village.

Our group, DREAMS (Dominican Republic Educational and Medical Services), led by three teachers, spent months fundraising for building supplies, collecting clothing and toiletries and preparing for the adventure of a lifetime.

Our life-changing experience began with a four-and-a-half hour flight and a two-hour bus ride to Ocoa, where we spent our first night.

In the morning we listened to a presentation by a member of ADESJO (Association for the Development of San José de Ocoa), the non-governmental organization we'd be working with. It provides houses, health care, agriculture and supplies to impoverished Dominican families living in the mountains.

Next we loaded our luggage into trucks and drove up the mountain to the work site. Our home was a one-room schoolhouse with eight sets of bunk beds.

Ten houses were under construction. During the week we unloaded wood, collected rocks, shoveled dirt, carried buckets of cement and painted one house. It was exciting to see our hard work paying off.

The most rewarding part, though, was meeting the people in the village who would benefit from these houses. The community was so welcoming that by the end of the week we felt completely at home.

Each night, the villagers visited us and we'd play with the children, sit around a fire and dance. Even with the language barrier (they spoke only Spanish), we were able to connect and laugh with them. Despite that they had very little, they were, in a way, richer than us, because they appreciated what they did have and were truly happy.

They were so grateful for the work we did, and we were thankful for the lessons they taught us about what is really important in life. Leaving them was, by far, the hardest part of the week.

Not only did we bond with the people of the village, our group also bonded with each other.

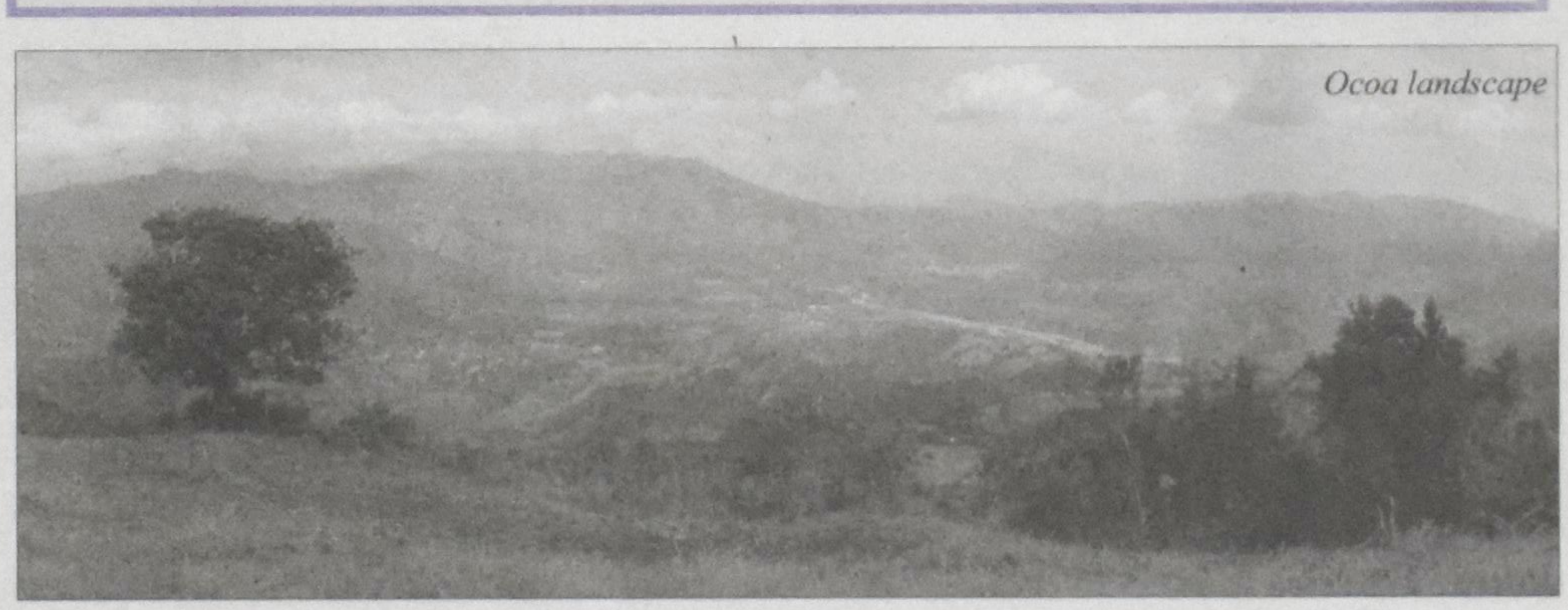
Each night, our teacher led a reflection, where we talked about our experiences and how we would use them once we returned. We didn't miss the luxuries of home as much as we expected. It was actually a relief to get away from the little things we worry about that suddenly seemed insignificant. We had a house, food, some clothes and each other, and that's all we needed to be happy.

Still, I didn't expect the culture shock when we returned home. After living with so little, the everyday things we take for granted are a lot more evident. Sleeping in a clean bed, taking a hot shower, even opening a fridge filled with food, all remind me of the poverty in the mountains. Houses are built on the side of cliffs, children walk to school without shoes and it's a five-hour trip to get medical care.

I will never forget the amazing week we spent in the Dominican Republic. While I feel guilty for having so much, I know I can use the blessings I've received – family, a good education and other opportunities – to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. The lessons I learned aren't really anything I haven't heard before – be grateful for what you have, live up to your full potential, each person can make a difference – but they mean a lot more now that I've seen poverty.

Our group's remaining goal is to be ambassadors, sharing our experiences, reminding people poverty is real and challenging them to make a difference.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life.



Ocoa landscape

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

I recently turned 34

Thirty-four is not "old". It isn't "young" either. Usually 34th birthdays aren't celebratory milestones like years such as 1 or 50 or 80.

For me, my 34th birthday was a milestone. Not a celebratory one by any means, but a milestone nevertheless. It was the first year in the past 10 years that I turned another year older without Marisa. It was the first time in my life that I had a birthday as a widower.

Marisa's death before Christmas started a chain of solitary firsts. My birthday was one of those solitary firsts. It is one in a seemingly unending line of firsts that happen without Marisa. The first Christmas. New Year's. Marisa's mom's birthday. Our 4 year-old daughter's birthday. The first spring campfire in the backyard. The start of the baseball season.

A whole slew of firsts. Each first brings grief, suffering, renewal, hope and growth. And then comes the next first. Then follows more grief, suffering, renewal, hope and growth. And then I feel relatively stable. Until the next first comes. And it isn't necessarily a big event that triggers the series of emotions. It can be something as simple as a supposedly arbitrary day that has no calendar noteworthiness but it is just something such as seeing the first robin as a sign of spring.

The reality of losing Marisa is that during each and every decision, every transaction, every joke, every dinner, every night of bathing three kids, every morning waking up remembering Marisa is gone, every silent evening, every time our son misses the school bus, every prayer, every grocery list, every time our daughter calls her vagina "bagina", every ride into church, every future plan, every radio song, every time I hear the word cancer, every time our 1 year-old calls me at 3 in the morning to put her soother back in her mouth, every time I get an e-mail from Marisa's wonderful parents, every solid sermon, every time all three kids need me at the same time, every time I tell my story and people have that look in their eye like I need sympathy, every yawn, every piece of junk mail with Marisa's name on it, and every time I think of Marisa's smile that lights up the room, I grieve.

I grieve. Because *our* world has changed.

And for me, the process of grief, suffering, renewal, hope and growth includes Jesus. It includes Jesus in each segment of this journey. For hope and growth to occur, I have to try to fully grieve the loss of Marisa and adopt the good that comes from it. I must somehow, through the Spirit's help, rise above what lies behind and reach forward to what stands ahead. I must experience personal transformation, which only comes through grace.

The piercing paradox is that I cannot have the best of both worlds. I cannot have Marisa in body and the personal growth that I will experience because of her death. The very same reason I am a better father is because I am with my children more often. But that is because Marisa has died. Her death will most likely help mould our children to be good people. Marisa's absence will hopefully compel them to be more sensitive to suffering and pain. Marisa's absence will cause my relationship with our children to be stronger than death. And the difficult irony is that the very same person that we want to share this growth with is not here. And she was the reason for it.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with his three children.

This is my body

Arie C. Leder

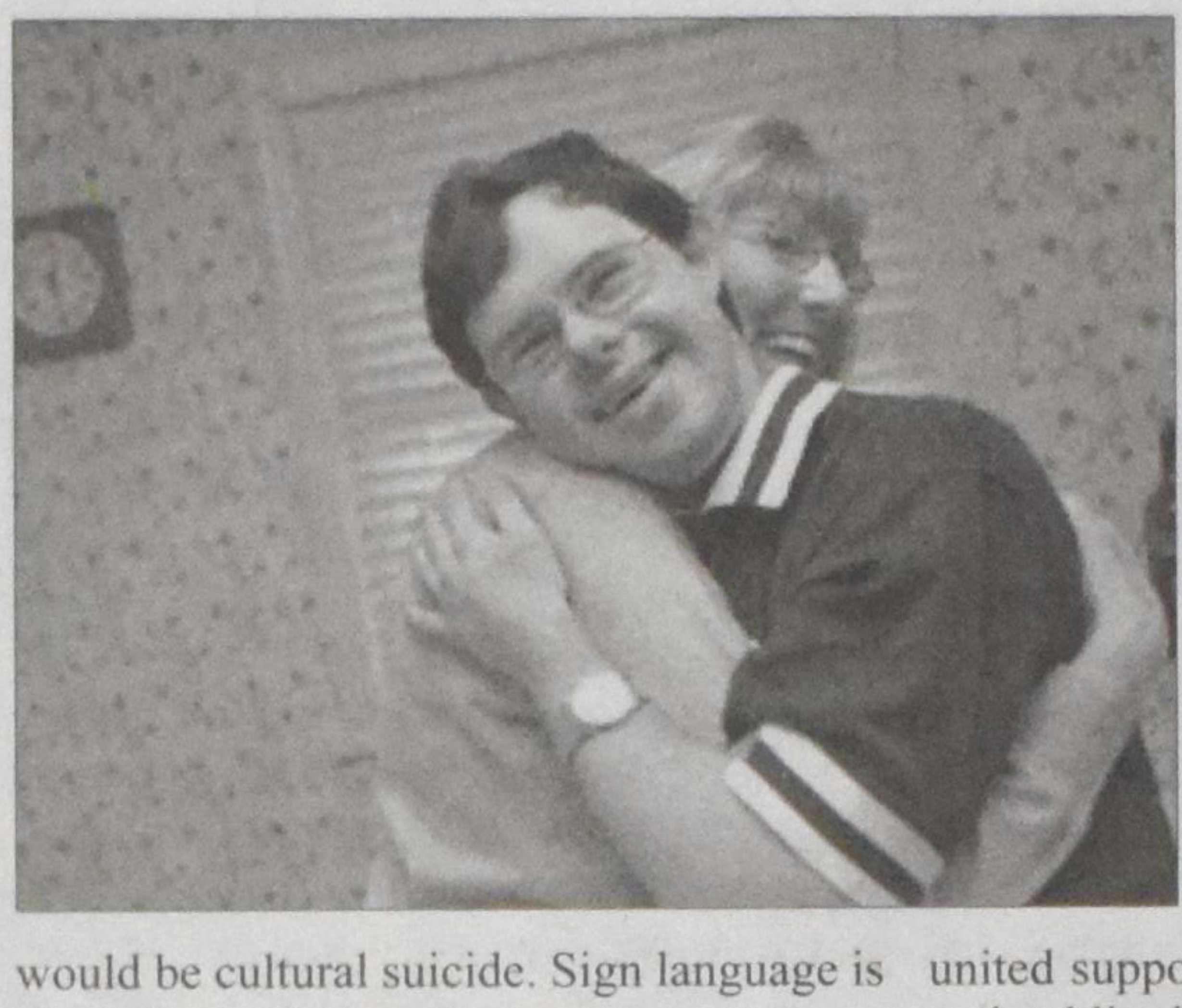
Every Sunday they worship among us, sing with us, and enjoy coffee and cookies afterwards. Like us they sit with their own or "adopted" families. No more noticeable than the young couple almost sitting on top of each other, the spoiled child loudly manipulating her parents, or the seniors occupying the back pew, they belong; they are our "Friends."

Sometime during the week, several times a month, "Friendship" groups gather in many Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States. These groups are served by Friendship Ministries (www.friendship.org), whose mission is "to share God's love with people who have cognitive impairments and to enable them to become an active part of God's family." And active they are.

Frank loves singing. The music he sings is recognizable, but not always pleasant for pew neighbors. Frank specializes in making a joyous noise to the Lord. Moreover, if it's a hymn Frank learned before the gray hymnal appeared he sings it blue hymnal style, politically correct changes in the words notwithstanding. Judy worships with deep certainty: every liturgical "Amen" is underscored by her own "Amen!" Her aging father was not always pleased with her worship style, her wanting to stand, by herself (she is wheelchair bound), finding the hymns, by herself. And then there is, let me call him George. When he sings he often raises his left arm, makes a fist, and then pumps the arm up throughout the song. More power to him. There are many such friends, cognitively and physically impaired, who belong to the body of Christ. Does this mean that the body of Christ is impaired?

Broken body theology

Disability has entered the theological discussion in a large number of books and articles (See below). Opinions move from the disabled body being a metaphor (Rappmann), to an argument for disability as another kind of diversity (Patterson), to the position that the body, including its disabled form, "is the midpoint and locus of communication between God and us," that "the body becomes the speaker, rather than the spoken to; it is the teacher rather than the taught. Not objects to be shaped by scripture and tradition, but active Words of God to shape scripture and tradition, bodies (which ultimately means whole human beings as body-selves) are given a place befitting that of the children of God." In other words, bodies have revelatory potential. (Richardson, 84-85, representing the position of James B. Nelson's *Body Theology*). Broken bodies, then, are as "whole" as other "normal" bodies (authors speak of the "hegemony" of the normal); God doesn't make mistakes. Students preparing for a career in speech pathology learn about the "deaf culture" which opposes hearing implants. Such intervention



would be cultural suicide. Sign language is normal, not abnormal.

The Christian tradition holds that when Jesus Christ comes again the blind will see, the lame will walk, the deaf will hear, the lepers will be cured, and the dead will be raised. Christ himself provided a foretaste of this new world (Matt. 11:4-6). The new earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13), will be discontinuous with the old world, including all those disorders, personal and social, that characterized the old order (Rev. 21: 3-4). The new view argues for continuity between the present and the future. One might say, the future is now. In this view the body defines us: your body, my body, whatever its shape or condition, I imagine, is the means of communication between you and God. You are your body. Somehow, I'm not comforted by that thought.

The body that defines us

The impulse toward the newer body theology no doubt is rooted in the marginalization and abuse disabled people have suffered throughout the ages and the desire to correct this. Their inclusion in theological reflection is healthy, as is the renewed focus on the role of the body as such. It should, however, take into consideration the church's classic theological formulations about these matters. Classic Christian thought is clear about one thing: we are not our bodies, whatever their condition or shape; we are body and soul. This is universally the case. From this it follows that the body, whatever its shape or condition, does not make us who we are. There is a spiritual component that must be considered.

Scripture has a high view of the body – it was created good and for human enjoyment in the service of God. Nevertheless, it declares that the post-fall body suffers all kinds of brokenness, so much so, that Paul defines the body as "the perishable" that will arise "imperishable" on the last day (1 Cor 15: 50-56). The greatest deformity the body suffers is sin (Rom 6:11-14), which expresses itself in all kinds of brokenness, physical and spiritual. From this point of view, the normal human state is that of being broken, by sin and its consequences. Because no one escapes this reality the faithful are urged to call upon the elders in times of sickness and sin, both of which disable the human person, that there may be well-being and forgiveness (James 5:14-16).

The body that is sick or stricken by sin, Martin C. Albl argues, is taken up into a wider web of relationships:

"The patient does not experience healing as an isolated individual. The community body, led by the elders, must gather and show its united support through prayer, confession, and public ritual. As integrity is restored to the individual body, so it is reinforced in the community body.

"Beyond the community level, the individual healing has cosmic significance. Healing of a single person does not merely 'symbolize' or 'foreshadow' his or her eschatological salvation. Rather, the ritual anointing and community prayers move the patient into the realm of both bodily healing and eschatological salvation. The system does not separate the two." ("'Are any among you sick?' The Health Care System in the letter of James," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121.1 [2002]: 142-143.)

The community Albl refers to is, of course, the church, the body of Jesus Christ. That body defines the body and soul of all who are its members by faith. We are not our bodies. Frank is not his body, neither are Judy, George, or Martin, who once told a minister that he was preaching too long, their bodies. All of us, broken in body and soul, may be comforted by the truth that we "belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to (our) faithful Savior Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, QA 1).

See: "The Body of Christ has Down's Syndrome," (*Journal of Pastoral Theology* 13.2 [Fall 2003]: 66-78), by John Swinton: "The Disabled Body of Christ as A Critical Metaphor–Towards a Theory (*Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* [7.4 (2003]: 25-40), by Susanne Rappmann; "Redeemed Bodies: Fullness of Life," (*Human Disability and the Service of God. Reassessing Religious Practice* [Abingdon, 1998], 123-143), by Barbara A. B. Patterson; and "God in our Flesh: Body Theology and Religious Education" (*Religious Education* 98.1 [2003]: 82-94) by Christopher K. Richardson.

Religious Liberty ... *continued from p. 6*

Pope Benedict XVI in St Peter's on Easter Saturday during the Easter vigil.

Numerous Islamic scholars immediately condemned the event. Aref Ali Nayed, director of the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre in Amman, Jordan, criticised what he called "the Vatican's deliberate and provocative act of baptising Allam on such a special occasion and in such a spectacular way. It is sad," said Nayed, "that the intimate and personal act of a religious conversion is made into a triumphalist tool for scoring points." Nayed opined that this would negatively impact Christian-Muslim dialogue, and called on the Vatican to "distance itself from Allam's discourse".

Yahya Pallavicini, a Milanese imam who is the vice-president of Italy's Islamic Religious Community, patronisingly described Allam's baptism "as an 'honest intellectual mistake' that had been committed with the complicity of the Vatican". Pallavicini told Italy's Adnkronos International (AKI) that he was embarrassed by the Pope's "indelicate choice of advisors" – as if the Pope is without authority or lacking discernment and is vulnerable to the machinations of cunning Islamophobic conspirators!

AKI reported: "Pallavicini agreed with Nayed in his attack on the baptism saying it put at risk the dialogue between Muslims and Christians." The implication is that Christian-Muslim dialogue can only proceed if the Church agrees to honour Islam's claim to life-long legal ownership of the hearts and minds and bodies of all Muslims irrespective of the individual's basic human right to believe according to his/her reason and conscience. Such a caveat leaves little space for meaningful dialogue.

Like Nayed and Pallavicini, Italy's deputy foreign minister for Middle East affairs, Ugo Intini, also criticised Allam's "very harsh condemnation" of Islam and called on the Vatican "after the emphasis given to Allam's conversion, to distance itself clearly from his statements".

However, the Vatican made it very clear that the Church not only believes in the religious liberty of all people (including Muslims), it also believes in the liberty of its members.

As Vatican spokesman Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi noted, Magdi Allam "has the right to express his own ideas. They remain his personal opinions without in any way becoming the official expression of the positions of the pope or the Holy See...believers are free to maintain their own ideas on a vast range of questions and problems on which legitimate pluralism exists among Christians. Welcoming a new believer into the church clearly does not mean espousing all that person's ideas and opinions, especially on political and social matters."

"The risk of this baptism"

According to Father Lombardi "the pope accepted the risk of this baptism" in

What it takes to open a door for the poor

Mark Lange

The real work of lifting the last billion out of poverty, the experienced and the expert will tell you, happens country by country, village by village: Digging wells, delivering bed nets, building schools. Faced with this reality, the greatest asset anyone from a wealthy nation might bring to the challenge of eradicating extreme poverty is a healthy balance of audacity and humility. Not to mention a refusal to mistake cynicism for sophistication.

Big levers for working the problem are within reach, but tend to be overlooked in practice or to be controversial in the popular mind. While no universal solutions apply, and no one claims to have all the answers, decades of hard-earned experience between rich and poor nations suggest a few fundamentals:

Change from within must be driven by brave people in the country, to assure the relevance, acceptance, and success of any assistance or reform.

Governments that support transparency, audits, strong judicial systems, a free press, and a professional civil service deserve direct support. For those that don't, ownership by civil society is critical. Without it, aid transfers to the worst governments shield the inept, enrich the corrupt, and entrench the brutal. A jaw-dropping 40 percent of weapons budgets in Africa are inadvertently financed by foreign aid. In the worst cases, the West needs to listen, think, and act more locally, getting more help directly to the people who need it, rather than through government-to-government transfers.

Property rights create jobs and self-sufficiency.

Westerners can secure loans with land, buildings, and other assets to start businesses and prosper. The last billion can't, which is unacceptable. The world's poor are sitting on untapped assets of $9.3 trillion, according to economist Hernando de Soto. That's 40 times the foreign aid received throughout the world since 1945. Setting up property systems to support enterprise is something the West learned to do 200 years ago, and must learn to teach.

Micro- and small-business lending challenges the idea that enterprise is a uniquely "Western" value. When ingenious nongovernmental organizations and lenders such as Grameen Bank in Bangladesh make small loans for small-scale garment and food-processing businesses, generally to women, self-sufficiency flourishes. The loans are audited and community-based, with default rates a fraction of the International Monetary Fund's tragically bad big-loan performance. For self-sustaining enterprise, small really is beautiful.

Trade beats aid.

Good trade policy is hard to visualize through a prism of the rich oppressing the poor. Yet abolishing all barriers to trade in goods and services could increase global income by $2.8 trillion and lift 320 million people out of poverty by 2015, according to a 2002 World Bank statement. Yes, globalization must be better managed and regulated, but not through trade barriers. Protectionism is stealing, from every side. Trade and growth offer a path to dignity and self-sufficiency.

Assessment and accountability.

Among so many innovations – in farming, water, healthcare, women's rights – we have only a vague understanding of their direct impact. For any organization trusted with other people's money, it's critical to report real results.

Abhijit Banerjee of the Poverty Action Lab lays out excellent methods for testing and controlled sampling of specific projects, to understand what works. Such assessment, to be credible, should be independent, supporting local trial and error, refinement and retrial. Assessment means accountability, and an opportunity to reward people for experimentation, revision, and results. There are no silver bullets, but the right statistical analysis and incentives can help identify silver buckshot.

Military intervention.

In the hardest cases, when a brutal last-billion regime is beyond reform, and its citizens have a just motive but no means to rid themselves of the worst, any outside intervention tests the limits of sovereignty. It also prompts charges of imperialism and nation-building, because it means picking winners, a vexing prospect when outsiders get it wrong.

That said, a community of conscience must resort to military force in some cases. After the Rwandan genocide, the UN established a "duty to protect" doctrine, calling for military intervention when a weak or corrupt government can't (or won't) protect the lives of its own civilians. In practice, we've seen too many examples of vacillation, Darfur chief among them. The difficulty of recruiting and equipping African troops equal to the task there and elsewhere calls for a broader UN military mandate – a coalition of the willing and able that includes sectarian interests to ease suspicions of colonialism – if the goal is to save lives.

No honest assessment of the means to help the last billion can omit this lever of last resort, when peace is the essential precursor to survival. If we're serious about eradicating abject poverty, we must find common ground on ways the developed world can apply all of the means at its disposal – technical, financial, trade, and military – more locally, more coherently, and more effectively.

---

order "to affirm the freedom of religious choice which derives from the dignity of the human person".

According to his testimony, which is written in the form of a letter to the director of Corriere della Sera, Paolo Mieli, Magdi Allam accepted the risk of this baptism for the same reason.

"Dear Director, you asked me whether I fear for my life, in the awareness that conversion to Christianity will certainly procure for me yet another, and much more grave, death sentence for apostasy. You are perfectly right. I know what I am headed for but I face my destiny with my head held high, standing upright and with the interior solidity of one who has the certainty of his faith. And I will be more so after the courageous and historical gesture of the Pope, who, as soon has he knew of my desire, immediately agreed to personally impart the Christian sacraments of initiation to me. His Holiness has sent an explicit and revolutionary message to a Church that until now has been too prudent in the conversion of Muslims, abstaining from proselytising in majority Muslim countries and keeping quiet about the reality of converts in Christian countries. Out of fear. The fear of not being able to protect converts in the face of their being condemned to death for apostasy and fear of reprisals against Christians living in Islamic countries. Well, today Benedict XVI, with his witness, tells us that we must overcome fear and not be afraid to affirm the truth of Jesus even with Muslims.

"For my part, I say that it is time to put an end to the abuse and the violence of Muslims who do not respect the freedom of religious choice. In Italy there are thousands of converts to Islam who live their new faith in peace. But there are also thousands of Muslim converts to Christianity who are forced to hide their faith out of fear of being assassinated by Islamic extremists who lurk among us. By one of those 'fortuitous events' that evoke the discreet hand of the Lord, the first article that I wrote for the *Corriere* on Sept. 3, 2003 was entitled 'The new Catacombs of Islamic Converts'. It was an investigation of recent Muslim converts to Christianity in Italy who decry their profound spiritual and human solitude in the face of absconding state institutions that do not protect them and the silence of the Church itself. Well, I hope that the Pope's historical gesture and my testimony will lead to the conviction that the moment has come to leave the darkness of the catacombs and to publicly declare their desire to be fully themselves. If in Italy, in our home, the cradle of Catholicism, we are not prepared to guarantee complete religious freedom to everyone, how can we ever be credible when we denounce the violation of this freedom elsewhere in the world? I pray to God that on this special Easter he give the gift of the resurrection of the spirit to all the faithful in Christ who have until now been subjugated by fear."

The power of faith

Of all the commentary on this event, none has been more powerful or perceptive than that written by "Spengler" of Asia *Times on-Line*. Spengler's piece entitled "The mustard seed in global strategy" can be found at LINK 7 and is a "must read" piece.

Spengler describes the baptism of Allam as a "revolution in world affairs...begun in the heart of one man".

He writes: "Osama bin Laden recently accused [Pope] Benedict of plotting a new crusade against Islam, and instead finds something far more threatening: faith the size of a mustard seed that can move mountains....

"Magdi Allam presents an existential threat to Muslim life, whereas other prominent dissidents, for example Ayaan Hirsi Ali, offer only an annoyance.... Why would Muslims trade the spiritual vacuum of Islam for the spiritual sewer of Dutch hedonism? The souls of Muslims are in agony. The blandishments of the decadent West offer them nothing but shame and deracination. Magdi Allam agrees with his former co-religionists in repudiating the degraded culture of the modern West, and offers them something quite different: a religion founded upon love...."

Magdi Allam

Spengler is correct when he writes: "If the Church fights for the safety of converts, they will emerge from the nooks and crannies of Muslim communities in Europe."

While governments may waver and even fail, the Church must stand firm in faith irrespective of the cost, and advance according to the word of God: "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6 ESV).

Elizabeth Kendal is researcher for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEA RLC)

Fair trade

Eating my words

Angela Bick

Do you play fair?

I come from a family that loves playing games. Strategy games are popular right now, the kind where players build and trade and execute complex plans. Usually, there's an element of chance mixed into the strategy. You can blame spectacular luck or devastating misfortune on the cards and the dice. During the game, I'm excited in a tense sort of way. I might inadvertently clench my fists or hold my breath as I buy, build and barter, hoping that every exchange will contribute to victory.

Each game comes with an extensive set of rules, which any slighted player is quick to reference. Even luck, good or bad, has to fit within certain parameters. Have you ever played a game where one person seems to win easily? Or when someone else lags unaccountably behind? When the competition is unbalanced, some of the fun seems to leach away. On the other hand, when players are equally matched, you'll hear, "That was a good game."

Now imagine that you're growing coffee in Nicaragua – this isn't the background for a new game; it's your life. You bring your coffee beans to town, hoping tensely for a good price. Unfortunately, you're paid less than the cost of growing the beans, and there's no set of rules to appeal to. You may try to strategize, to buy or build or barter, trying to earn enough for your children's school fees or at least supper. But you never can. Luck, whether good or bad, doesn't seem to have anything to do with it. When the deck is stacked against you from the start, there's only one word for it: "Unfair!"

It's unfair that small family farmers, who grow more than half of the world's coffee, "cannot benefit from the global demand for their crop." It's unfair that the current coffee market is so unstable that farmers can't count on incomes even covering expenses. It's unfair that "the average $3 latte delivers less than 2 cents" back to coffee farmers; retailers, roasters, and middlemen divide the rest of the profit.[1] Finally, Christians are chiming in: "Unfair!"

A short history of the fair trade movement

As early as the 1940s, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) made fair trade goods available in Northern markets. At first limited to churches and fairs, the enterprise expanded into an international supply chain called Ten Thousand Villages. In 1968, student movements across Europe popularized the slogan "Trade not Aid." This emphasized that developing nations should be given – instead of donations – a fair chance on the world's markets.

Consequently, many Alternative Trading Organizations sprang up across North America and Europe, with Oxfam in England and Worldshop in the Netherlands among the first. Originally, these organizations sold hand-crafted goods, but interest in such products was limited. Not everyone could agree on fair trade qualifications, or how to verify fair trade claims. Eventually, a Dutch NGO called Solidaridad began a fair trade labelling initiative in 1988 that worked on designing an international label for fair trade products.

Currently, the fair trade certification mark is monitored by Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International and used in over 50 countries. Agricultural goods (including coffee) account for three-quarters of fair trade products, far more than hand-made crafts. The strictly regulated trade-mark guarantees that farmers are paid a fair price and that the product is of good quality.

The CRC's third sacrament

I think we've integrated coffee into so many routines in our culture that we forget we don't grow the stuff ourselves. I've heard people joke that coffee is the third sacrament around here. North Americans drink more coffee than anyone else, and it's a rare church that doesn't depend on coffee to encourage fellowship after worship. So often we read about the hardships that people in other countries endure, and it's hard to know how to help. This is how you can help: drink fair trade coffee.

Sarah Brouwer is on the Missions Team at her church, a mid-west CRC. She's trying to generate awareness about fair trade products. With her small group, she went over the Fair Cup Intro Pack that's available through Faith Alive resources. After going through the material, they had a brief discussion. Brouwer pointed out that if their church bought fair trade coffee for fellowship hour, it would increase their yearly budget by less than $100. She read the final question on the handout: "Do *you* think we should switch to fair trade coffee?" There was a pregnant pause.

Finally, someone spoke. It was a missionary, visiting on furlough from a remote tribe in Africa, and boggle-eyed that such a question needed deliberation.

"Well," she blurted out in a clipped, British accent, "it's kind of a no-brainer, isn't it?"

Fair trade movements are growing, but Europeans remain more familiar with the term than we are in North America. Brouwer was surprised by how few people at her church had heard the phrase before. Yet her congregation is striving to fulfill part of the Micah Challenge, as CRWRC puts it, to live justice and love mercy. It's all about playing fair.

A few things you can (easily) do

According to Macleans, Tim Horton's sells just over 4.5 million cups of coffee a day in Canada. "That's revenue of close to 5.5 million, every single day, on a product that costs pennies a cup to make" (Maich 46). Would it make a difference to that Nicaraguan farmer if Tim Horton's paid a fair price for its coffee beans?

FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED

Look for this logo

To level the playing field between coffee bean growers and drinkers, buy fair trade. To find where it's sold in your area, see www.equalexchange.com or www.transfair.ca. To order the Fair Cup Intro Pack, call 1-800-730-3490 in Canada or 1-800-333-8300 in the USA. It can also be downloaded from www.crcna.org/pages/fairtrade.cfm

To enjoy delicious biscotti with your next cup of coffee, follow the recipe below. I brought some of this Espresso Biscotti to – where else? – Wednesday morning Coffee Break.

Espresso biscotti

Preheat oven to 350.

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. instant coffee powder
- ½ cup finely ground almonds
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ cup whole unblanched almonds

Combine in large bowl and stir well.

- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/3 cup strong coffee, hot

Mix honey and coffee in small bowl, and then add to flour mixture until stiff dough forms.

Divide dough in half. Shape each half into a log about 40 cm long.

Place logs at least 5 cm apart on a greased baking sheet. Bake for 30 mins, until well risen, firm and golden.

Cool logs for about 15 minutes and place on cutting board. Cut on diagonal into 1 cm slices. Return cookies to sheet, cut side down, and bake for 15 mins, until dry and lightly coloured.

Biscotti literally means "twice-baked." Italians dip these hard, dry cookies into coffee, tea or mulled wine to soften them before eating.

(Endnotes)

1 Information taken from the *Fair Trade Coffee Project* and used by permission of the CRWRC's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action.

Angela Reitsma Bick lives in Barrie, Ontario. Send your interesting stories or recipes to: al_angbick@hotmail.com.

Did you know. . . . fair trade coffee is served in all denominational buildings, at international conventions hosted by CRWRC, and at Synod?

Some Protestant denominations with Fair Trade projects

Mennonite Central Committee	www.org/us/washington/coffee/
Lutheran World Relief	www.lwr.org/coffee/index.asp
Presbyterian Church	www.pcusa.org/coffee

Brewing a Biblical Perspective

Take a look at these Scripture verses and with a friend, spouse, or small group, talk about some of the discussion questions below.

Isaiah 58:6-8	Jeremiah 22:13	II Tim. 1:7
Romans 12:21	I Cor. 12:26	

Discussion Starters

1. Your congregation likely has a tradition of offering relief to the poor. It's a tangible expression of our faith, including financial support to help carry on vital mission in Jesus' name. Do you think our *consumer* dollars could economically harm the people our *offering* dollars are meant to help?
2. Read the following quote aloud. Discuss historical and Biblical situations where this was true. Is it true today?
   "There has never been but one question in all of civilization – how to keep a few men from saying to many men: You will work and earn bread and we will eat it."
   Abraham Lincoln
3. Because coffee is one of the world's most heavily traded commodities, it affects a tremendous number of people globally. What would it take for your group or congregation to make your next cup of coffee a fair cup?

This material has been adapted from the *Fair Trade Coffee Project* put out by CRWRC's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action. It is used here with permission.

You can download the Project's "10 Steps to Making Fair Trade Coffee Your Congregation's Coffee of Choice" at www.crcna.org/pages/fairtrade.cfm

Growing gratitude

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Years ago, after returning home from visiting a Congolese refugee who had been separated from his wife and five children for a year and a half, I rushed into my daughter's bedroom and knelt by her bed, where she was tucked in for the night. A wave of thanksgiving engulfed me as I thought about the privilege of holding Davita's small hand, of being able to chat later on with my husband, of knowing my teenagers were home, and of feeling safe in our home and community.

Each day we have many reasons to thank God. And yet we often aren't thankful, despite the apostle Paul's reminder "to give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (I Thessalonians 5:18). How can Christian parents nurture an attitude of thanksgiving in their families and thus obey this command?

Start by realizing that genuine thanksgiving is Spirit-driven. The prophet Habakkuk's declaration of thanksgiving, despite terrible circumstances, was inspired by the knowledge that God was his Savior: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Imagine thanking the Lord like Habakkuk did!

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you eliminate dissatisfaction, because it's one of the greatest deterrents to thanksgiving. Why are you and your children discontented? Is it because you love material things? Ecclesiastes 5:12 warns, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." Or perhaps you're dissatisfied because you haven't advanced in your career as you hoped to. Maybe your children are disgruntled because their grades don't match those of their classmates. The prophet Isaiah asks, "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy?"(Isaiah 55:2a). Reflecting on this question will open a window on eternal values as you analyze and begin to understand the dissatisfaction that hampers your family's thanksgiving.

If dissatisfaction is the heartbeat of thanklessness, then complaining is its mouth piece. Challenge and counteract complaining. When your son protests that the boy next door has a better bike than he does, help him understand the root of his dissatisfaction, namely jealousy. Challenge him to see the positive attributes of his own bike. Perhaps mention that this is the best bike that you can afford for him. And encourage him to be thankful for the privilege of owning his bike. If he continues to complain, tell him that he's responsible for his attitude and that he can always earn money to buy another bike.

Role model gratitude for your children by refraining from constant complaining. Parents who stand in the whine line griping about everything from frayed furniture to obnoxious neighbors shouldn't be surprised when their children get in line right behind them, grousing about unfashionable clothes or lack of entertainment funds. Expose your children to people who are suffering physically, mentally, or spiritually. Not many things inspire our gratitude for what we have more than seeing other people's needs. Take your children along when you serve supper at a soup kitchen, encourage them to watch a TV report on a recent natural disaster, or help them choose a news story describing human anguish for a current events report. Talk to them about the impact that exposure to these events had on them, and ask if they realize how much they have to be thankful for.

Sculpt family devotion times into avenues for thanksgiving. In your prayers mention specifically what you are thankful for. Is everyone in the family healthy? Was your son spared a serious injury when a car hit him while he was biking? Do you always have enough food to eat? Express your gratitude to God for health, safety, food, and mostly for Jesus Christ and his redemptive work on behalf of your family and others in the world. Sing songs that express gratitude. When reading from the Bible, highlight characters who remember to thank God.

Take note of all the simple reasons for thanksgiving that your children bring to your attention. My 7-year-old daughter, Davita, said once, "I wouldn't like the world if we couldn't touch each other!" Another time she exclaimed, "Mom, I love your singing!"

On another occasion 4-year-old Benjamin brought a wounded, baby blue jay into the kitchen, cupped in his pudgy hands. "Mom," he said reverently, "now I know what a bird feels like – all warm!" What reasons for thanksgiving are your children pointing out to you?

Tell your children about the tangible things that inspire your gratitude. Each spring I go to a greenhouse to buy a basil plant. Years ago my friend Irene introduced me to the fragrant herb that is so delicious when cooked in spaghetti sauce. When I plant it in my garden, I'm reminded of what her friendship meant to me while she was living. Later, when I pick the leaves and wash and cut them, I remember how we laughed together and had serious conversations. The smell of basil inspires me to give thanks to God for her. Is there a concrete thing that stirs your appreciation for God's goodness? Pass the story on to your kids.

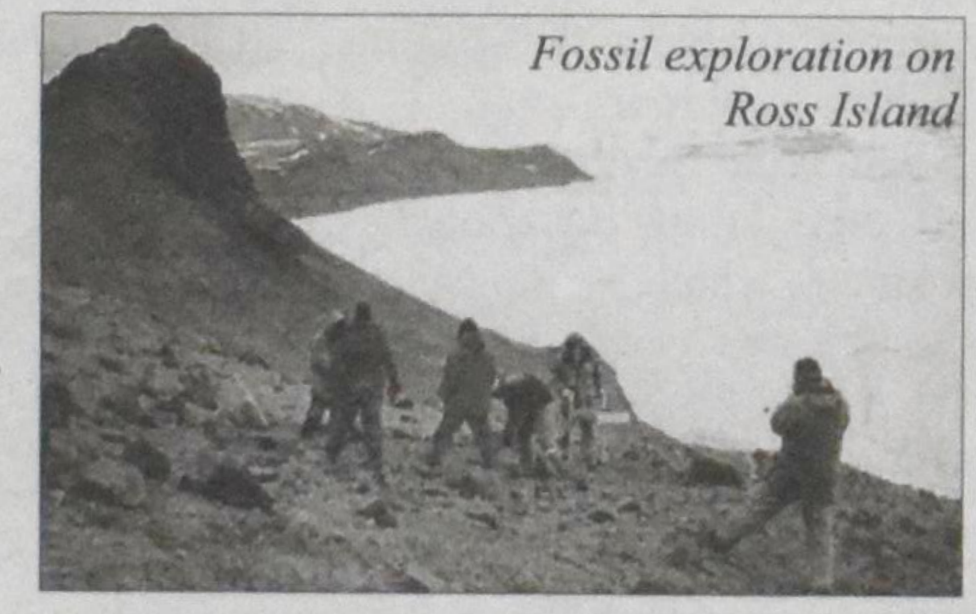
The apostle Luke tells us that when Jesus healed the 10 lepers, "one of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan." We can almost hear the disappointment in Jesus' voice when he asks, "'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return to give praise to God except this foreigner?'" (Luke 17:15-18).

May our thanksgiving be as exuberant as that of the one leper who returned to thank Jesus.

Antarctic mud *... continued from p. 10*

Florindo, a soft-spoken geologist from the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in Rome.

The team must rush to finish its work. Fifteen miles from McMurdo, the drill rig rumbles atop 28 feet of floating ice. Its shaft churns through the ice and then 1,300 feet of seawater below to reach the seabed, where it gradually chews a 3,600-foot hole. Drillers must extract that entire section of core within eight weeks – while the weather is warm enough for outdoor work, but before summer temperatures make the ice too slushy to support the 40-ton drill rig.



Fossil exploration on Ross Island

The drill turns 24/7, as do the two shifts of geologists analyzing each day's core, 90 feet of which is delivered by helicopter at 10 p.m.

At 2 a.m. sunlight streams horizontally through the windows of the core lab. Christopher Fielding, the University of Nebraska geologist who heads the vampire shift here, motions toward a section of core that alternates paper-thin layers of gray and white stone – layers of mud that solidified long ago. "We've had a lot of nice things to look at," he says, "but this is particularly nice."

When these mud layers formed, Antarctica must have had less ice than it does now – otherwise such delicate layers would have been scrambled by the piles of stones that coastal glaciers dump into the sea. They represent only a short chapter – a few thousand years out of millions – but they're sure to provoke "a feeding frenzy" in the morning, says Dr. Fielding, as people debate how to study them further.

One table over, another section of tonight's core traverses a different period of history. Pebbles lay suspended like chunks of fruit in a Jell-O salad, trapped in the gray background of the core exactly where they fell into the mud millions of years ago.

Sonia Sandroni, from the University of Siena in Italy, leans over the table like a student taking an exam, drawing each stone on a pad of paper with a handful of colored pencils.

"Every single stone is recorded in color," says Fielding. "She's up to about 60,000 so far."

The color Dr. Sandroni chooses for each pebble signifies the type of rock: red for granite, blue for sandstone, white for pumice, and so on. These rocks traveled to the ocean inside glaciers and icebergs, and by matching them to rocks in different parts of present-day Antarctica, she can tell where the rocks came from.

Just then Sandra Passchier, a sedimentologist from Montclair State University in New Jersey, points out something special in another section: embedded in stone, two conjoined circles of white, each the size of a pencil eraser. They are the cross section of a fossil shell called a.

"They're single-celled organisms related to amoebas," she says. "They have these little feet that they stick out of their shell to feed."

"I haven't seen any that big before," says Fielding as he gazes at the wonder. It's a single cell large enough to see – a Neanderthal amoeba.

These surprises are part of the fun of looking at cores. A core is a blind stab into the past: a four-inch aperture through which to view an entire epoch of history. That narrow gaze is sure to overlook some prizes – like a rare specimen that the drill misses an inch to the left.

But then come moments of serendipity, says Fielding: "You're always surprised when you find a large, well-preserved fossil. The chances of hitting a complete mollusk in a four-inch cylinder drilled into the seafloor are pretty slim. And we've had some beautiful fossils."

Each fossil presents an opportunity; not an eureka moment, but at least a chance to reconstruct an ancient environment by identifying the species that lived there.

★ 38 YEARS OF SERVICE ★

CRC EXTENSION FUND

"...serving Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools since 1970"

Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed Church and Christian school building projects in Canada.

RATES TO June 30, 2008

We pay **4.5%** on CRC deposits.

Earn approximently **4.9%** on RRSP/RRIF

Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund

45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1

Fax: 416-465-6367 **Call**: **416-461-1207**

Reflections

Welcome to my perch
Bert Witvoet

Superlatives about Jesus

Some years ago, Alice and I were traveling on a highway east of Des Moines, the I-80, in fact. We were returning from our almost annual trip out west to our children and grandchildren. We came upon a huge sign that read: "Jesus Adult Super Savior." I pointed it out to Alice and thought it a strange sign – bizarre even. Why refer to Jesus as an adult savior? Does that mean that he's a savior for adults only? The disciples would have liked that designation. "Hey, kids, scoot. Don't you know that Jesus is an "Adult Savior?" Or was he a savior when he became an adult as opposed to when he was a child?

And why "Super Savior"? Is he in competition with other saviors or Superman? Is Jesus American, after all? Does he show up at the Superbowl or in the Super Store? Do people refer to him as Superstar. Why this penchant for superlatives?

But then, as we drove on, the mystery was solved. Less than a mile further east we saw another huge sign right on top of a large store. The sign read: "Adult Super Store." The name did not immediately register in my mind, but it did not take me long to make a connection between the sign and the term "adult entertainment." That phrase is loaded with connotations of "Keep away from kids. This is pornographic stuff suitable only for adults."

A clever foil

Later on, when we got home, I checked out the store's name on the web to verify my suspicions. Sure enough, the store sells sex toys, "adult" videos, pornographic pictures and magazines. The word "adult" suggest maturity, which belies the kind of behaviour that the store encourages.

After seeing that second sign along the I-80, the previous sign made sense. It was playing off against the second sign – "Adult Super Store." It functioned as a counter witness. Jesus is the Adult Super Savior, who can save you from sexual addictions and enslaving entertainment. Now, instead of thinking it bizarre, I considered the first sign inspiring and courageous. I now admired the people who so boldly proclaimed that Jesus has something to say about pornography. It made me feel better. I generally don't like to see Christians make silly statements about Jesus. I don't get good feelings about cheap tricks. But this was different. These brothers and sisters who stood behind the decision to put up the sign, in a sense, stooped to conquer. They are my kind of people.

So much more

Of course, the minute you take away the context of that second sign, the slogan "Jesus Adult Super Savior" becomes utterly silly. You could not use it as a synopsis of Colossians 1: 15-20, which begins with "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or ruler or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." That passage in the New Testament is so magisterial that any attempt to explain what that means will fall short, just as the highway sign in Iowa falls short. We must not think that we can do justice to Jesus' mission by seeing him primarily as a personal saviour or a morality officer. The claims that the Colossians passage makes about Jesus, the Christ, and his supremacy are far greater than that suggested by the first sign. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning of all things and the end. The scope of Jesus reign and power is far beyond our understanding.

This becomes clear when you read N.T. Wright's *The Challenge of Jesus*. The author writes that Jesus brings in the Kingdom of Heaven and that he announced "a new world, a new context, and he was challenging his hearers to become the new people that this new context demanded, the citizens of this new world." That's an awe-inspiring mission statement don't you think? It's a very political concept, too. It seeks to overthrow destructive powers and authorities, although it does so by dispensing grace and truth. Its scope is universal.

Radical discipleship

Wright goes on to say that the Sermon on the Mount, for example, "is not first and foremost, a private message for individuals to find salvation in Jesus, though, of course, it includes that in its wider reaches. Nor is it simply a great moral code (though it does of course contain some shining examples of great moral precepts). It makes the sense it does because it depends, all through, on Jesus' kingdom-announcement, and on the fact that Jesus himself was through this announcement, summoning people to follow him in the new way of life – the kingdom way."

The summoning that radiates from this announcement is a call to radical discipleship. It's so radical, that we should all receive it with fear and trembling. The kingdom way is so far removed from what often passes in our society, even in the Christian community, for common sense and normal fare, that we need to tear ourselves loose from many of the presuppositions that swirl around us. God calls us to a radically non-conformist citizenship.

In Jesus' days there were three kinds of responses to God's call. Some decided to withdraw from the world and study the Scriptures, some compromised and fell into line with the Roman regime, still others took up the sword and took a revolutionary position. But Jesus rejected all three responses. His kingdom would come through the practice of justice and mercy in ways that would disturb those who were comfortable with the status quo or protective of their own little kingdoms.

Does that make Jesus an Adult Super Savior? Hardly. But it is true that we Christians do not think big enough when we contemplate the mission to which we are called. Do we really know what it s to be a new people? Is our Jesus big enough?

Let me end this column with a poem I wrote a few years ago.

The supremacy of Christ

Colossians 1: 15-20

"He is before all things
and in him all things hold together."

Is your Jesus high enough?
Does he tower far above
All those high and mighty institutions?
Does his saving power comprise
Politics and enterprise?
Or does he not care about pollution?

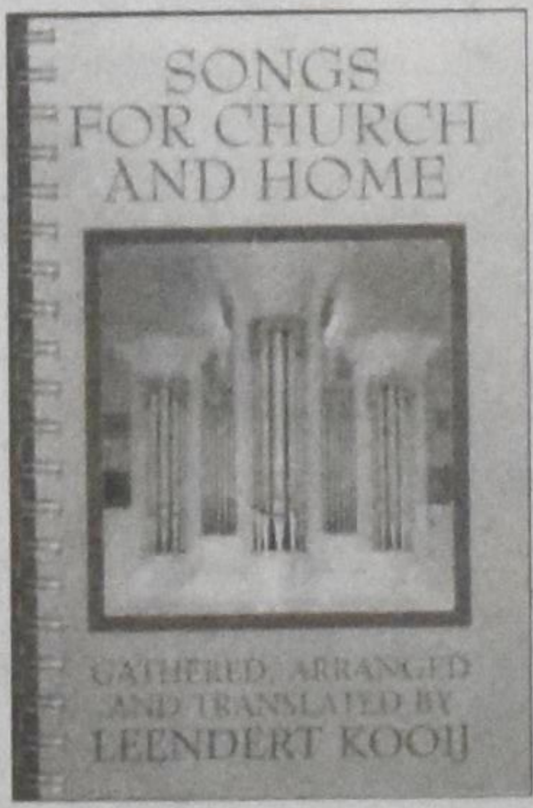
Is your Jesus bold enough?
Does he call a tyrant's bluff
While he scans the laws of every nation?
Does corruption need to cease?
Is he working for world peace?
Or is he just tuned to your salvation?

Is your Jesus wise enough
As the image of God's love?
Does he give you comfort in the courts?
Are you bold to speak his name
In the public halls of fame?
Or do you not crown him king of sports?

Does your Jesus play a part
in philosophy and art?
Does his Ph.D. in mercy shine enough?
When the mighty call a scrum
Will you join him in the slum?
Or are you embarrassed by his love?

Is your Jesus head of all?
Is he more than ten foot tall?
Is he master of world trade and education?
Is he Chairman of the Board?
Is he CEO and Lord?
Does he hold together all of this creation?

Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.



Gathered, arranged and translateby Leendert Kooij (263 pages)

A wonderful Book which should soon be in every home. It took sometime to prepare, but here it is!
Complete with Dutch cross-reference index, to quickly find favourite songs.
Full of wonderful surprises. Choirs and also churches are all excited about it. Many songs you won't find anywhere else. Divided in sections, very clear music and print.

Beautiful pictures. Something for everyone!
A most wonderful gift for Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.
It keeps alive our heritage! A beautiful gift for your children and grandchildren.
Great settings and translations. Meaningful texts and not difficult to play. Ready to be enjoyed by all!

PRICE !! ONLY. **$ 19.95** Plus $8.00 for postage	Special: Buy 5 get 1 free (postage and handling free)

Also available:
WORDS ONLY BOOK...LARGER EASY TO READ PRINT $9.95 each (Discount for quantities)
POWER POINT (WORDS) DISC coming.

Order from: LEENDERT KOOIJ RECORDS AND BOOKS
90 Topcliff Avenue, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3N 1L8
Telephone: 416-636-9779 email: landmkooy@rogers.com

New!!

**Discount available on quantity orders.*

Business Directory

The sign of quality!

SCHRÖDER® FURNITURE Canada Ltd.

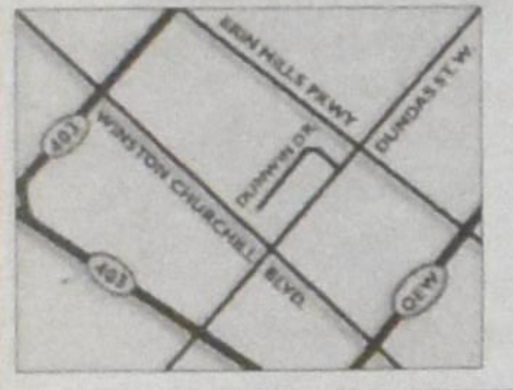
Do you have problems getting out of your existing furniture?

Is your sofa wearing soft?

Our Coil Spring Constuction gives you a lifetime of

painfree comfort

At Schroder furniture you can find exceptional **Quality** and **long lasting** Seating Comfort.



Come and visit us at
2140 Dunwin Dr.
Mississauga, Ontario
905-828-9511
www.schroderfurniture.com

Elim Investment Opportunities

Bonds

Shorter term investments are also available upon inquiry.

This is not to be construed as an offer to solicit investments and no investment can be made until the Investor has received an Information Statement issued by Elim Housing Society.

Established by the Elim Housing Society in 1995, Elim Village is located on 20 acres in the heart of Surrey's Fleetwood area. Based and operated on Christian principles, Elim's vision is to provide various levels of quality care for seniors.

Today, over 300 people call Elim home and are able to enjoy the benefits of living within a caring Christian retirement community. As part of Elim's ongoing successful financial strategy, we offer a variety of investment opportunities. Our rates are determined by the Royal Bank of Canada's prime rate.

We currently offer **Royal Bank of Canada's prime plus 1%** (not to exceed 7%)

On Apr 7th, 2008, Elim Investments were accruing interest at **6.25%**

ELIM Village

For more information regarding investment with Elim Village, contact **Terry-Lynn Dryfhout** at **tld@elimvillage.com** or call **778.996.7755**
Visit our website at **www.ElimVillage.com**

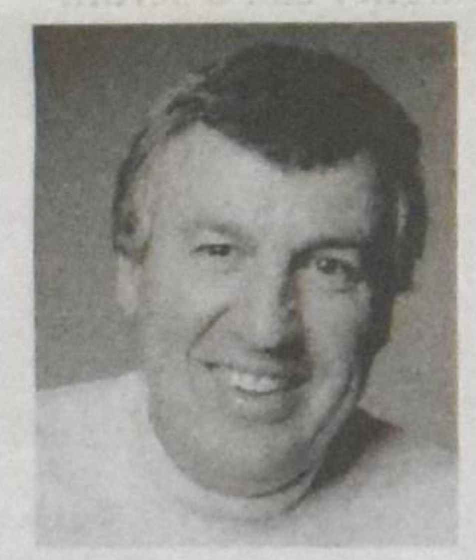
A Christian Retirement Community

Put our experience to work for you.

THE KLOET SCHURINGA TEAM RE/MAX

Outstanding agents. Outstanding results.

Lifetime Achievement Award · RE/MAX Platinum Award · Hall of Fame · Hall of Fame



George Kloet
Sales Representative
gkloet@trebnet.com
www.georgekloet.com

Pauline Schuringa
Sales Representative
pschuringa@trebnet.com
www.paulineschuringa.com

RE/MAX Realty Enterprises Inc., Brokerage
1697 Lakeshore Road West
Mississauga, ON L5J 1J4
Tel.905.855.2200

WE STAND BENEATH OUR ROOFS

DYKSTRA BROS. ROOFING *(1992 LTD)*
R. R. # 1 Beamsville, On L0R 1B0
Free Estimates
www.dykstrabros.com
Fax: 905-563-0301 **Phone: 905-563-7374**

BUSINESS AND SERVICE DIRECTORY

RESERVED FOR YOUR BUSINESS!!
Only $25.00. Run your ad monthly or perhaps every issue.
Check out our website: www.christiancourier.ca for issue dates and deadlines.
Call us at 905-682-8311 or email: ads@christiancourier.ca

BCE selling for $42.75
BCE Consider a gift of all or part of your shares.
Full charitable receipt AND no capital gain tax.
Need help to get this to your favourite charities?
Contact **Link Charity Canada Inc**
1-800-387-8146 www.linkcharity.ca

MERRITT FUNERAL HOME
287 Station St.
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
Serving Families for 4 Generations
Director: **Thomas C Merritt**
Fax 905-957-1371 Ph: **905-957-7031**
Website: www.merritt-fh.com FSAC

Winter Bookkeeping & Tax Service
4184 Mountain St.
PO. Box 844
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0
Ph: 905-563-4471
Fax: 905-563-4696
Email: wbts@bellnet.ca

MEESTER INSURANCE
Smithville, Ont.
Phone:
905-957-2333
or
1-800-465-8256
www.meesterinsurance.com
AGRI-BUSINESS MEESTER INSURANCE BROKERS SPECIALIST

JERRY'S AUTO BODY
(Beamsville) Inc.
Serving Beamsville and area since 1969
•Complete Collision Repairs
•Quality Refinishing
Jerry Gerritsen 5529 Regional Rd. #81
Alan Gerritsen Beamsville ON L0R 1B3
Phone/Fax: **905-563-7702**

Digital Art & Graphics INC.
DESIGN • PRINT • IMAGING
578 Upper James St.
Hamilton, ON L9C 2Y6
For all your printing needs
Call Brian or Kathie Bezemer at:
1-800-247-0155 or **905-574-0822**
Email: bezemer@digitalartandgraphics.com

BAKKER
BARRISTER & SOLICITOR
570 Welland Avenue
St. Catharines ON L2M 5V6
905-688-9352
Albert J Bakker

ARIE HOOGERBRUGGE
Associate Broker
RE/MAX
DelMarRealty Inc.
840 Queenston Rd.
Stoney Creek,
ON L8G 4A8
Ph: 905-662-5300 Fax: 905-664-2300

R. HAALBOOM, Q.C.
Barrister Solicitor Notary
Richard Rijk Haalboom, Q.C., B.A., J.D
7 Duke St. West **Ph: 519-579-2920**
Suite 304 **Fax: 519-576-0471**
Kitchener, Ontario N2H 6N7
E-mail: richard@haalboom.ca

Classifieds

Anniversaries

Wyoming, 1958 April 11 1993, Dunnville

With joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we hope to celebrate, D.V., the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

IKE AND MARIE DEKLERK (nee DeBoer)

We pray that God will continue to bless and keep you in his care.

With love from your family:
Jim & Nelly Deklerk, *Dunnville, Ont.*
Christopher and Trish, Morgan, Tammy, Lindsey, Allen, Derrick, Robyn, Sean and Kayla
Frances & Rick Koornneef, *Winona,Ont.*
Jeffrey, Nicole, Ryan
Bill & Dianne Deklerk, *Grimsby, Ont.*
Helena, Mark, Adam
Henry & Willie Deklerk, *Caistor Centre, Ont.*
Emily, Gregory, Thomas, Jana
Jeanette & Don Tilstra, *Dunnville,Ont.*
Jason, Daniel, Scott
Lisa & Tony Schaafsma, *Woodstock, Ont*
Allyson
Michelle & Greg Fluit, *Smithville, Ont.*
Kiersten

Wedding text: Isaiah 49:10, 11.
Friends and relatives are invited to an **Open House** on Saturday, April 19, 2008, from 3-5 p.m. in the fellowship hall of the Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, Robinson Rd., Dunnville, Ont.
Best wishes only please!

Home address: RR 9, Dunnville ON N1A 2W8

1948 February 20 2008
Grootegast Listowel

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Psalm 121:8

With thanksgiving and praise to God, we announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

LEO AND BONNIE HOVIUS

Love and best wishes from your children,
Shirley & John Wassenaar
Thunder Bay, ON
Pat & Murray Koetsier
Harriston,ON
Jack & Anna Hovius
Listowel, ON
Love also from grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Please celebrate with us at an **OPEN HOUSE**, the Lord willing on Saturday, April 26, 2008 in the Bethel CRC in Listowel.
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Home address: 3 Centennial Court, Listowel ON N4W 1K6

1948 Franeker May 5 Cobourg 2008

60th Wedding Anniversary

JOHN AND JANNY SCHOON (nee Bergsma)

With thanks to God for his faithfulness we rejoice and celebrate 60 years of marriage with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

Love and Best Wishes from:
Joyce & Peter McBride – Karen (Ian) Jonathan
Teena & Bob Druce – Jennifer & Derek (Lauryn & Bryce)
Jack & Cathi Schoon – Devon & Rob, Phillip
Dick & Kim Schoon – Rachel & Erin
Alice & Matt Holleman – Amy (Andrew) Mark, Vicki, Lucas
Peter Schoon – Keifer

Family and Friends are invited to celebrate with us at an **Open House** to be held on May 4th 2008 from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Grace Christian Reformed Church in Cobourg, Ontario.

Mailing Address: 323 Tweed St, Cobourg ON K9A 2R8

Brampton 1958 April 5 London 2008

Commit your way to the LORD
Trust in him and he will do this. Psalm 37:5

ART AND EDA TIESMA

And it came to pass that in the days of the ruler Steven the Harper, there was a glad tumult and great rejoicing in the land to our great and gifting God.

For lo, Art, the man of great wisdom and reveller of parties, had wed **50 Years** the wife of his youth, the beloved helpmate Eda, keeper of the hearth.

Rejoicing with them are the fruit of their loins and the descendants they are blessed with:
- Elizabeth, herder and milker of cattle and her helpmate Ted VandenTempel together with their offspring: David, Darryl, Thea, Sofia, Derek and Benjamin of the lush and verdant lands of Poole ON.
- Yolanda, keeper of the deceased and her helpmate Jamie Cameron together with their offspring: Jay, Wendel and Wesley, from the land of former renown Walkerton ON.
- Heather, painter of dwellings and expounder of the Word, and her helpmate Aubrey Postma, together with their offspring Tyler and Aaron from the mountains of Abbotsford BC
- Lucinda, keeper of the hearth, and her helpmate, Mike Klapwyk, together with their offspring: Isabel, Quin and Ilse, of the plains of Edmonton AB
- George, he that is already rejoicing in glory, together with all the angels.
- Art Jr., man of great stature in the family and scribe of fasteners and bolts, and his helpmate Jennifer Overgaauw, together with their offspring: Spencer, Paige, Madison and Emma from the lands east of the parental dwellings, Beachville ON.

On that great and glorious day, when 50 years had passed that the snow flew and the rings were exchanged, they had made a great pilgrimage to the land of our spiritual ancestors and were not in the land of their own dwelling to receive honours from kith and kin.

And so the man and his wife have made provisions for a great **Open House** gathering in the fairer season of July 12th from the 4th hour until the 6th hour (10 a.m. to 12 noon) in the tent of the flock of the Good News CRC in the land of their dwelling, London ON, the gracious Lord willing.

All praise and thanks to Him be given.

Correspondence: 308 Spruce St, London ON N5W 4N5

1958 March 28 2008

We praise God with our parents,

HARRY AND IDA BEIMERS
(nee VanDyk)

on the occasion of their **50th Wedding Anniversary**.

Behold I am with you and will keep you and will watch over you wherever you go.
Gen. 28:15a

We love you!
We thank God for the blessing you are to all of us!

From all your children:
Ingrid, Ed, Helen, Renee, Mike, Bert and their families including 11 wonderful grandchildren

Home address:
23 Butler Street West
Brighton ON K0K 1H0

Obituaries

Do not fear for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.

On March 17, 2008 at the age of 65

BERNIE KRUISSELBRINK

went to be with his Lord and Saviour.
Beloved husband of Bea (DeJong) Kruisselbrink and loving father of Dave (Kathy), Cheryl (Jeff) and Terry (Carolyn).
Dear grandfather of Rachel †, Breanna, Jack, Gabriel, Sierra and Joshua

A memorial service was held on Sat. March 22 at Chatham Grace CRC with pastors Wm. Koopmans and Ralph Koops officiating.

55 Alexandra Ave, Chatham ON N7M 1Y2

After a brief illness, on April 3/08, the Lord called home his child and our dear friend

ENGEL VAN BEILEN

widower of Tina (November 2005)
May our Lord comfort his children and grandchildren.

We will miss you Engel.

Your friends:
Harry & Cathy Snoek
Dirk & Giny Van Wyck
Leny Venema
Jerry & Janine Lock

Obituary

March 22, 1911 April 2, 2008
Tholen, NL Edmonton, AB

I lift up my eye to the hills-
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
Psalm 121:1,2

JOHANNA C. SCHWEITZER (nee Lanting)

Went home to be with her Lord.

Predeceased by:
her loving husband of 61 years, Johannes Schweitzer in 1997.
her great-grandson, Jonathan DeJonge in 1998
Loving mother of:
Alice & Morris Greidanus, *Grand Rapids, MI*
Jane & Bill Verveda, *Edmonton, AB*
Tony & Clara Schweitzer, *Winnipeg, MB*
Ralph & Joanne Schweitzer, *Maple Ridge, BC*
Edith & Ed DeHaan, *Lethbridge, AB*
Marja & Peter Slofstra, *Courtice, ON*
Loving grandma of:
23 grandchildren & 59 great-grandchildren
Also survived by sister-in-law, Nel Schweitzer, *in the Netherlands*

A family and memorial service was held April 8, 2008 at Trinity CRC, Edmonton, AB.

H. William Verveda, 3111-130 Ave, Edmonton AB T5A 3A9

Retirement

THE REVEREND
GRAHAM E. MORBEY, Drs., MDiv.

will conclude his 28 years as Chaplain to Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo
Friends and Colleagues are invited to celebrate this event with him in the Paul Martin Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University

RECEPTION
May 14, 2008:4:30-6:30pm
For further information:
John Mohle 519 343 2456 x21

Travel

Christian Fellowship Motorcoach Tour
5-day Escorted
Scenic Pennsylvania tour

including Lancaster/Amish country, steam train ride, paddlewheel boat ride, daily devotions, singalongs.
Pickups in Hamilton and Jordan. Early June. Call **Mary** of Verstraete Travel at **905-988-3882**, or email uppercan@mergetel.com

Job Opportunities

For Rent

SHARED ACCOMODATION: **Niagara Falls**, one or two bedrooms on main floor or basement bedroom. Parking, laundry. 500+ utilities. Female student or young professional. Close to Brock U and Niagara College, bus route & QEW. Non Smoking, no pets. Available immediately.
Call **905 353 1958**

Vacation

For rent: 2 bedroom, 2 bath **guest cottage** in **Tallahasee, Florida**. $650 per week furnished with linens, close to state park, hiking & biking trails, tennis. Call **850-386-6648**

Holiday in Holland

Beautiful self-contained cottage in **Friesland** www.chestnutlane.nl.

Eco-friendly Eastern Ontario Cottage for Rent:
This three bedroom solar-powered and winterized cottage sits on beautiful Lower Beverley Lake.
For more information checkout http://freewebs.com/unpluggedbay or call 905-304-8823 to arrange rental times

Why book a cabin when you can have a house? **Georgian Shores** is a **family-friendly cottage** on Georgian Bay. This 1450sq. ft. fully equipped cottage has room for eight and a huge yard for all kinds fun. Golfing, hiking, swimming and many more activities are close at hand. Georgian Shores Cottage is booking for the spring, summer and fall. Reduced rates for spring and fall.
Visit our web site at www.georgiancottage.com or call **519-538-5581** for booking or more information.

For Sale

Two Eminent 2000, Dutch-made Grand Theatre organs in excellent working condition

Organ 1.
Two manuals plus two-octave pedals, suitable for classical and church music as well as general auditorium or home entertainment. Many optional configurations include street organ, honky tonk piano etc. Outstanding harmonics. Automatic rhythm accompaniment setting and other features. Comes with bench, settings books, schematics, layout drawing, trouble-shooting manual and parts list.

Organ 2.
Two-manual organ, same features as organ 1. One octave pedals, no bench.
Paid over $5000 for these two instruments, will sell for best offer, buyer arrange shipping from Stouffville.

Contact John or Carol Dekker at **905 640 7263**

"A Vacation with a Christian Perspective"

The annual Milk & Honey Summer Festival will be held **June 2 - 5, 2008** at **Redeemer University College**.
For more information or to register, call 905.648.2139 ext.4521 or go to www.redeemer.ca under News & Events.

COVENANT C.R.C. in **St. Catharines**, Ontario is seeking a person to join our Ministry Team, in the position of

Youth Ministry Director

This enthusiastic person would have the opportunity to encourage the spiritual and social growth of our youth, to help lead their faith development, and assist them in living out their commitment to our Lord. For a Job Description and qualifications, please visit our website www.covenant-church.ca.

For more information or to send a resume please e-mail: secretary@covenant-church.ca, Attn. Youth Ministry Director, or call Pastor Jim Dekker (905-937-3534, 905-934-8395) or Casey VandenBogert (905-562-7118 after 6pm).

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
an Anglican parish in downtown **Ottawa,** is seeking a

part-time music director

to plan worship music, coordinate volunteer musicians, and play keyboard/organ for services. For details, see ***www.churchoftheascension.ca/music*** or call ***613-236-3958***.

IS PASTORAL CARE YOUR GIFT?
The **Burlington CRC** is now receiving applications and expressions of interest for a person who will serve us as our

Part-time Pastor to the Seniors

The position calls for someone with a caring heart and a love for seniors. The primary responsibility of this new staff member will be pastoral visitation but, if desired, opportunities to preach are also available.
A full job description is available upon request from our Administrative Assistant, Tina Van Dyk, at office@burlingtoncrc.ca.
Applications and/or resumes can be forwarded by **April 22** to Jack Herrewynen, Council Secretary, at the same address.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is seeking a new

Director of Faith Alive Christian Resources

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

to provide strategic planning and administrative oversight. Faith Alive is the publishing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church; the resource provider of the Reformed Church in America, and a supplier of resources for various other denominations.

Successful candidates will have strong business experience, experience in developing new markets, adaptability, strong administrative skills, a personal commitment to the Reformed Christian faith, and a member of the Christian Reformed Church (or willing to become a member).

A complete job description is available on our web site at www.crcna.org under Jobs/Careers. To apply send cover letter and resume to fasearch@crcna.org no later than **May 30, 2008**.

CLAC
Christian Labour Association of Canada

Career Opportunity:
Labour Representative

The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) is accepting applications for labour representative positions working out of its Langley and Fort St. John offices, in order to service a growing provincial membership.

Representatives act as advocates for employees in workplaces unionized by CLAC. This requires them to possess strong analytical, writing and relational skills, along with an interest in conflict resolution. These skills are also paired with a solid grasp of Christian social justice principles and a demonstrated history of their application.

Some evening work and travel within the province can be expected. CLAC offers a competitive compensation package including a comprehensive benefit plan and pension plan. Previous education or experience in Labour Relations or Human Resources and/or knowledge of the construction industry would be considered assets.

More information on CLAC can be found at www.clac.ca.

For further information, contact Ken Baerg, Provincial Director at 1–800–331–2522 or kbaerg@clac.ca.

Dordt College

Student Services Positions

Dordt College invites applications and inquiries for two Director level openings in the area of Student Services:

Director of Residence Life - provide leadership in the area of student development and is committed to the holistic development of students including academic achievement, intentional living, healthy relationships, and providing students with space for learning, prayer, worship, and cultural impact.

Director of Career Services and Calling - provide a range of services including assisting students in choosing a major, resume development, internship options, job placement, and graduate school preparation and application.

Details for both positions can be found at:
http://www.dordt.edu/offices/human_resources/staff_openings.shtml

Candidates with a strong commitment to a Reformed, biblical faith and the mission of Dordt College, and an interest in working with students, faculty and staff on a Christian campus should send a cover letter and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources, at the address below. A review of applications received will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Contact: **Human Resources, Dordt College,**
498 Fourth Ave. NE, Sioux Center, IA 51250
Email: hr@dordt.edu
Phone: (712) 722-6011 Fax: (712) 722-1198

Dordt College does not discriminate as to age, sex, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.

Institute for Christian Studies
UPCOMING EVENTS

Is delighted to announce our

40TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER & SILENT AUCTION

All welcome

Saturday May 10
Toronto (Woodbridge), **Ontario**

For tickets see
www.icscanada.edu/40thanniversary

1967 – 2007

"We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ"
1Thessalonians 1:3

ICS

Classifieds

valentine
A Division of Merit Vacations
Martinair Charters
available from April 4, 2008
Prices from **520.00** *taxes extra 75.00
Mississauga 905-890-5333 or 1-800-268-6144
London 519-472-2700 or 1-800-265-1141
TICO Registration #4499356

Low interest rates getting you down?
If you're over 65, have you considered
a **charitable gift annuity**?
- Wonderful income - as high as 10%
- Largely tax exempt
- An charitable receipt for at least 20% of the annuity amount.
- This lasts as long as you live
- Worry free
- Benefits the charities of your choice

Never heard of a gift annuity? Call for a no-obligation quotation or have a child or grandchildren call on your behalf.

LinkCharity Canada Inc.
45 Harriet St. Toronto
Ontario M4L 2G1
Ph: 1-800-387-8146
Fax: 416-465-6367
www.linkcharity.ca Email: info@linkcharity.ca

ADA REALTY LTD
2011-137 Ave. Suite 404
Edmonton AB T5A 4W2
780-473-8149
Sid Vandermeulen
Contact us first
when you think of moving
to Edmonton & district.
Home of confidence

A **charitable** gift **annuity** offers:
REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
- the peace of mind of a guaranteed lifetime income, largely tax free
- the satisfaction of knowing that you will be providing a future gift for Redeemer University College

Blended rate of 6 - 10% (capital returned & interest) for those over 65.
Please contact us for your own confidential, no-obligation quote.
Information available on other gift-planning options as well.
Christian Stewardship Services
Redeemer University College 777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1J4
905-648-2139 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

MARANATHA HOMES
living **independently** in Christian **community**

Maranatha Homes, located in south Burlington near many amenities, is a place where Christian seniors can enjoy independent living in community with others. The Home's newly renovated units and award winning architectural design, combined with its reasonable rent rates make Maranatha an attractive and affordableaccommodation for seniors.

For further information contact:
Rosanne van der Woerd,
109-3260 New St.
Burlington, On. L7N 3L4
Ph: **905-681-0311** Email: rvanderwoerd@sympatico.ca

The **Liberation Choir** presents our
Spring Interlude Concerts
Joining us for these concerts,we welcome
"The Choraliers"
an all male chorus from the Brampton area.
to be held on
May 24, 2008 at 7.30 pm
Crosspoint CRC
(Formerly the Second CRC)
444 Steeles Ave West,
Brampton ON L6T 3N2
Interim Director - Rob Kinnear,
Guest Organist - Chris Dawes
Accompanist - Sharon Sandink
and on **May 30, 2008** at 7.30 pm
Mountainview CRC
290 Main St.E.,
Grimsby ON L3M 1P8
Interim Director - Rob Kinnear,
Guest Organist - Ian Sadler
Accompanist - Sharon Sandink
Tickets $12.00 - For tickets call
905-906-5207 or contact
Tom Overbeek 519-941-8518 email - tom.overbeek@sympatico.ca.
Tickets are also available at the door.
For more information please visit
www.liberationchoir.com.

---

wbm Wallaceburg Bookbinding
& MFG. CO. LTD.
We Bind, Rebind and Restore
Save money– Don't buy replacements!
Churches: Send us one of your hymnals as a sample and we will rebind it at no cost. *Normal price for quantities of five or more-$7.50*
Personal Orders: We will bind short run editions e.g. family histories as well as rebinding and restoring personal books.
1-800-214-2463 FAX (519)627-6922
95 Arnold St. Wallaceburg ON N8A 3P3 http://wbmbindery.com

Sarnia Ontario "Men in Praise Festival"
The Crescendo Men of Praise
Chatham-Kent, Men of Note
Sursum Corda male choirs will participate in the annual Men in Praise festival.
Special Guests from Holland The Double Male Quartet "Tops"
"Sursum Corda" is hosting this event at Temple Baptist Church on **Saturday April 26, 7 PM** Ticket $10.00 available at the Sarnia Christian Bookstore. For more info dmeeder@cogeco.ca

---

Friendship Day in **Burlington**
sponsored by The Canada Netherlands Friendship Association.
May 3 - flag raising ceremony at Burlington City Hall at 12 noon.
May 5 - Monday the celebration will continue at the Royal Botanical Gardens.
For more information visit
www.cnfa.ca or contact
Jack Vander Laan 905 332 7000
or Hans Kloet 905 336 7184

Marriage encounter weekend
London, ON. **May 2-4**. For more information or to register on-line, go to **www.reformedme.org** or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org

---

Call our EXPERIENCED TEAM of PROFESSIONALS for a quote Today!

Toll-free: 1 866-694-7276
Tel: 905-632-6192
www.pvv-insurance.com
P.V.&V. Insurance Centre
Trust our EXPERIENCE
A division of Peacock, Vanderhout & Vandyk Insurance Brokers Ltd.

Unique Oak European Furniture
at the
Furniture Barn

Imported from
Belgium & Holland
Couches, Chairs
Tables, Wall Units
Decorative Items
'Dutch Bikes'
'Old World' Craftsmanship & Comfort
'pop in & enjoy a cup of coffee'
app'ts/info call: 905 **563-0209** Herman & Janny Dunnink
51383 Hewitt Rd. Wainfleet hjdunnink@hotmail.com

MARTIN...WHEELS INTO HOMES WITH HIS FLOORING - VAN SHOWROOM

Martin Herrewynen
Owner / Decorator

Martin's Flooring
& WINDOW BLINDS
Carpet • Hardwood • Laminates
Ceramics • Blinds • Shutters
Call ***The Mobile Store...To Your Door!***
519-756-8100 *Serving The Greater Golden Horseshoe*
25 Years "Building Our Reputation Through Trust"

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

April 12 Annual Festival of Praise – Rehoboth United Reformed Church opposite HDCH, **Hamilton** 7:30 p.m. – 4 male choirs participating: Ambassadors; The Choraliers; Collegium Musicum and The Crusaders. For info or tickets: vaneekae@sympatico.ca or p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca or go www.schuurman.ca/ambassadors.htm Tickets $12 and $10 fo seniors.

April 13 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry R. DeBolster will be preaching.

April 19, 20 Maranatha CRC, **Cambridge** 50th anniversary. Celebrations and special events will be held on Saturday April 19 at 7 p.m. and Sunday April 20 during the 10 a.m. service.

April 26 Sarnia Ontario "Men in Praise Festival" at 7 pm at the Temple Baptist Church. For more info email dmeeder@cogeco.ca See ad below.

May 2 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (Music Director, St. Jude's Anglican Church) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 2 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (Music Director at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, Hamilton) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 2-4 Marriage encounter weekend in **London**, ON. For more information or to register on-line, go to **www.reformedme.org** or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org

May 3, 5 Friendship day, in **Burlington** sponsored by The Canada Netherlands Friendship Association. For more information visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack Van der Laan 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet 905 336 7184.

May 9 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Eric Obsborne (Minister of Music, Trinity Anglican Church, Cambridge) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 10 Institute for Christian Studies 40th anniversary dinner and silent auction. **Toronto**. For tickets see www.icscanada.edu/40thanniversary. See ad this issue.

May 14 Receiption for Rev. Graham Morbey as he concludes his 28 yrs as chaplain to Wilfred Laurier University & University of **Waterloo**. 4:30-6:30 pm. For more information: John Mohle 519-343-2456 x21

May 16 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Alison Clark (Music Director, St. Mark's Anglican Church, **Brantford**) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 23 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring James Noakes (Music Director at St. Paul's Cathedral, London) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 23, 25 Bethel CRC, **Dunnville** 50th anniversary. See details in ad this issue.

May 24 Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Crosspoint CRC, **Brampton**. See ad this issue.

May 24, 25 Chatham Christian Schools 50th anniversary celebration. Open house 1-4 and evening program. Sunday worship. More information to follow in the April 14 issue or visit www.chathamchristian.ca

May 30 Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**. See ad this issue.

May 30 Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (Music Director at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, Hamilton) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)

May 31, June 7, June 8 Calvary CRC, **Ottawa**, 50th anniversary events and worship. See ad this issue for details or go to www.calvarycrc.ca

June 2 -5 Milk & Honey summer festival at Redeemer University College. See ad this issue.

June 6 & 7 The 50th anniversary of **Wellandport** Christian School Plan Reunion Celebration. See ad.

June 21, 22 All Nations CRC anniversary celebrations. **Halifax**, NS See ad this issue.

CALVARY CRC OF OTTAWA
50TH ANNIVERSARY

We thank God for his faithfulness throughout our 50 years of ministry. We invite former members and others to join us in celebrating this anniversary at events on May 31, June 7 (by reservation) and the morning worship service at 10 am on June 8, 2008. For more information visit our website at www.calvarycrc.ca or contact Linda at 613-821-1911 or lindamallette@hotmail.com .

"To hold forth the word of life" – Phil. 2:16

50 YEARS
Chatham Christian Schools
1957-2007 • Psalm 78:4-7

"... We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord." Ps 78:4

With praise and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, the

Chatham Christian Schools
look forward to celebrating its 50th anniversary

Saturday, May 24/08
Open House 1-4 p.m: games, decade rooms, etc.
Evening celebration Event
- Open House from 6:30-7:30 p.m
- Celebration Program 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 25/08 worship service
- St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave W.
- School choirs performing
- Guest speaker - Albert Postma (seminary student)

For further information visit www.chathamchristian.ca and click the 50th info tab.

May 28, 1958 - 2008
BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
of Dunnville, Ontario, Canada

With thankfulness to God, Bethel will be observing their **50th Anniversary**, celebrating God's goodness with a special service on Sunday, May 25, 2008 and a Celebration Dinner to be held on Friday, May 23, 2008. All members and former members are heartily welcome to join us in this celebration of God's grace. For more information contact the church at BethelCRC@mountaincable.net

ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF HALIFAX

invites you to a celebration of God's goodness and faithfulness. **On Saturday and Sunday, June 21 and 22, 2008**, we will mark **fifty years** as a Christian Reformed congregation in Halifax. The celebration begins 6 p.m. June 21 with a traditional All Nations Potluck, followed by a variety show. On Sunday we will have a special worship service at 10 a.m., which will be followed by a picnic. We would love to see past members and old friends again – email info@allnationscrc.org or call 902-429-7136 ahead of time, so we can prepare a special welcome for you.

"Praise the LORD, all you nations. For great is his love toward us."

WELLANDPORT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
50th Anniversary 1958-2008

The 50th anniversary of Wellandport Christian School is a time to reflect, with gratitude, God's faithfulness to the WCS community.

Plan to attend.

Friday, June 6, 2008
Celebration Program
Riverside CRC Wellandport
7:30 pm

Saturday, June 7, 2008
Reunion at the School
1:00 to 5:00 pm

Email: wcs@wellandportchristianschool.ca
Website: www.wellandportchristianschool.ca
Phone:905-386-6272
Address: PO Box 123, Wellandport ON L0R 2J0

For issue dates, deadlines, job opportunities, community events, contact information, feature articles and more, visit our website at: www.christiancourier.ca

MARANATHA CRC
Cambridge, Ontario

celebrated its **50th anniversary** with a special service held on January 27 2008.

Celebrations and special events are planned for Saturday, **April 19** at 7 p.m. and on Sunday **April 20** during the 10 a.m. service.

We would like to extend a special invitation to all former members as well as those who would like to celebrate with us.

"I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord "plans to give you hope and a future"
Jeremiah 29 : 11

EUROPE & WORLDWIDE
DCA Travel & Cruise
Visit us at: www. dca-travel.com
info@dca-travel.com
TORONTO: 416-224-5211
1-800-667-2525
Canada wide - ticket home delivery!
DCA Travel Insurance - Lowest Cost, Better Coverage

50% OFF SPECIAL OFFER
CELEBRATION CRUISE 2009
ON BOARD OCEANIA'S INSIGNIA
★★★★★ 5 STAR LUXURY ★★★★★
February 5-17, 2009 - 12 Days
Samba Rythmns
Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro
Includes airfare from
TORONTO/VANCOUVER
Services of Advantage Travel Host
Pre-Paid Gratuities, Onboard Gifts
Cocktail Reception.
All Meals and Entertainment
(Air Taxes - Government fees extra)

Europe YOUR WAY
- GREECE PACKAGES from CA$1349.00 plus CA$325 taxes incl. air, cruise and Mykonos
- SPAIN PACKAGES Self-Drive Tours, Accommodation, Cruises
- ITALY PACKAGES 7 days from CA$989.00 visiting Rome, Florence and Venice or Villas in Tuscany.
- IRELAND Driving Holidays from CA$499.00
- SCOTTISH Driving Holidays from CA$599.00

Call for details

This is your Travel Centre for all your Travel Needs!!!

News

Food prices soar globally

Rice shortages are appearing across Asia.

Daniel Ten Kate

Bangkok, Thailand – Rice farmers here are staying awake in shifts at night to guard their fields from thieves. In Peru, shortages of wheat flour are prompting the military to make bread with potato flour, a native crop. In Egypt, Cameroon, and Burkina Faso food riots have broken out in the past week.

Around the world, governments and aid groups are grappling with the escalating cost of basic grains. In December, 37 countries faced a food crisis, reports the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and 20 nations had imposed some form of food-price controls.

In Asia, where rice is on every plate, prices are shooting up almost daily. Premium Thai fragrant rice now costs $900 per ton, a nearly 30 percent rise from a month ago.

Exporters say the price could eclipse $1,000 per ton by June. Similarly, prices of white rice have climbed about 50 percent since January to $600 per ton and are projected to jump another 40 percent to $800 per ton in April.

The skyrocketing prices have prompted millers to default on rice supply contracts and bandits to steal rice as they aim to hoard the crop, and sell it later, as prices continue to rise.

"The farmers are afraid as their fields have been robbed in the nighttime," says Sarayouth Phumithon, an official at the Thai government's Bureau of Rice Strategy and Supply. "This is just the beginning. The problem will get worse if the price keeps increasing."

The reported thefts in five rice-growing provinces in central Thailand are the first signs of criminal activity in this region stemming from the sharpest global spike in commodity prices since the oil crisis in the mid-1970s. Across the world, higher food prices are triggering thefts and violence – both by people who can't afford to eat and those who want to make an easy buck.

Three men delivering food for the World Food Program(WFP) in Sudan were reported killed Tuesday, the latest in a surge of attacks that have delayed the arrival of vital supplies to some 2 million people in the region.

So far this year, the UN agency says 56 trucks have been hijacked in Sudan; 36 trucks remain missing, and 24 drivers are unaccounted for. The WFP says that banditry has reduced by half the amount of food normally transported to the western region of Darfur at this time of year.

"All parties must recognize that the drivers of humanitarian vehicles and their cargo are serving a neutral purpose," WFP Sudan representative Kenro Oshidari said in a statement.

Last year, the Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index increased an unprecedented 40 percent from 2006, and this year it is projected to continue rising. Surging oil prices (in turn, boosting fertilizer and transport costs) combined with a drop in production due to droughts in Australia and the Ukraine have helped to drain global food stocks.

While rice production is rising, consumption is growing faster. The US Department of Agriculture forecast rice stocks to fall to their lowest level since the mid-1970s, and wheat stocks are projected to hit their lowest point since 1946, the year after World War II ended.

These factors, combined with a falling US dollar, steadily rising demand from developing countries, and biofuel policies that mop up excess cereal production, have all helped boost world prices.

The FAO expects food prices to stay high for the next three to five years, presenting a challenge for governments trying to keep domestic food prices low in order to keep poor citizens properly fed and avoid mass protests and social unrest.

Some countries like Vietnam, India, and Pakistan have banned grain exports. On Wednesday, Cambodia's prime minister ordered a two-month ban on rice exports to neighboring Thailand and Vietnam "to guarantee food security."

Meanwhile food importers Indonesia, Korea, and Mongolia have cut or reduced import tariffs. As Philippine farmers warned that the country was facing a serious rice shortage, the government signed a deal Wednesday to import 1.5 million metric tons (1.65 million US tons) of rice from Vietnam.

Rice paddies in Indonesia

Analysts note that the current shortage isn't hitting as many people as hard as past shortages. As incomes rise worldwide, food is a smaller portion of the family budget. "Governments have tried to protect domestic prices from fluctuations in international prices, and they have succeeded in the past," says Sumiter Broca, a policy analyst at the FAO. "The key point is that the proportion of income spent on food is much lower than it used to be, so that provides a cushion. The situation is not as serious as it was in 1974."

Preparing rice paddy in India

Citizens of Nepal and India now spend about 35 to 40 percent of income on food, down from about 70 to 80 percent in the early 1970s, Mr. Broca says. In developing countries, food costs eat up only about 7 percent of household incomes.

The FAO expects food prices to stabilize and eventually drop as farmers plant more grains. That's already starting to happen with wheat and corn. But the next few years could be difficult.

On April 7, the WFP, a UN agency that distributes food aid to some 70 million poor people, made an "extraordinary emergency appeal" to donor countries for $500 million to prevent cutbacks in its global operations.

In the past two weeks, two rice suppliers in Cambodia defaulted on contracts with the WFP, claiming the new higher prices would offset any penalty for reneging on the contract.

"That's extremely worrying, as it indicates the price of rice, just like the price of wheat, is now continuing to increase," says Paul Risley, a WFP spokesman. "That makes it very difficult for us to find rice at an affordable price. The ability to end malnutrition is limited when food prices are so high."

Countries with higher foreign exchange reserves and food stocks, including China, Japan, and India, can still afford the high food prices if necessary. But nations with low currency reserves like the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal may need assistance from international financial institutions to afford food if prices continue to spike.

Although higher food prices mean trouble for consumers and governments, they do increase incomes for farmers – assuming their crops aren't stolen. Still, farmers aren't making as much money as a middleman with a good-sized warehouse.

Rice millers in Thailand are defaulting on contracts with exporters to capitalize on higher prices, and speculators are renting warehouses to store paddy. Rice in paddy form (in the husk) can be stored for about a year and a half before quality starts to deteriorate, and milled rice can be held for another six months.

"Nobody dares to sell now as we don't know where the price is going," says Chookiat Ophaswongse, president of Thailand's Rice Exporters Association. Although Thailand, the world's largest rice exporter, has shipped record amounts in January and February, traders have lost money on futures contracts as prices have jumped more quickly than anyone expected, he says.

In the Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has vowed to crack down on rice hoarders. The government has ordered police to stake out warehouses and follow trucks to see where the rice was going, she said.

Thailand may try to sell off 2.1 million tons of rice stocks to keep domestic prices low. But as long as prices stay high, Thai farmers will need to burn the midnight oil keeping watch over their fields.

"Most farmers must sell crops immediately as they don't have a good warehouse that can withstand attacks from rats, birds, chickens – or human thieves," says Mr. Sarayouth.

Associated Press reports were used in this story.